



UMEÅ UNIVERSITY

THE GREEN SHADOW OF CHRIST

A Reception-Exegetical Study of Jesus and Pan in the Gospel of Mark

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Dissertation for PhD

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To Elia, Fredrika, Amanda, and Valentina

Abstract

This thesis investigates presentations of Jesus in the gospel of Mark, mainly chapter 6 and 9, in the light of the juxtaposition of Christ and the Greek nature god Pan. This juxtaposition recurs in the reception history of Pan in Western European culture. The study employs a Reception-Exegetical method and retrojects the motif of Pan as Christ on one hand, and Pan as Satan on the other, onto the text of Mark. The purpose of this is to make relations between humanity, nature, and the divine in the gospel of Mark visible in a new way, which in turn is relevant for contemporary ecological interpretations of the bible.

Chapter 1 provides an overview of the comparison of Christ and Pan in reception history. It is shown that Christ is identified with Pan mainly as shepherd-god, and god of all nature. At the same time, Pan as Satan is contrasted with Christ and portrayed as antagonist to Christ.

Chapter 2 presents the historical context of Jesus, Mark, and the cult of Pan, focusing on the intersection between ideological, political, socio-economic, and ecological factors, in Roman agrarian society during the first-century. The study shows that myths, cult, and features of Pan thematically, theologically, and geographically intersected with those of Jesus as presented in the gospel of Mark.

Chapter 3 analyses the events at Paneas/Caesarea Philippi – a main cult place of Pan – in Mark's narrative and argues that Jesus is presented as a new Elijah-figure, and that Pan is the implied counterpart to the previous adversary Baal.

Chapter 4 focuses on the shepherd motif in Mark chapter 6 and argues that Mark's narrative mimics imperial ideology in Roman pastoral poetry, and rhetorically challenges the imperial aspirations of bringing fecundity, abundance, and order. Jesus is depicted as the shepherd-messiah derived from Jewish traditions, over against the imperial rulers and the shepherd-god Pan, who occupied a significant symbolic role in imperial ideology.

The final chapter focuses on the trajectory of Pan as a demonic being in Jewish and Early Christian traditions, showing that the association of theriomorphic demonic beings with Pan likely occurred on the basis of the similarities in pictorial, spatial, and functional depictions, implied most tangibly in the demonic figure Asael/Azazel in Jewish apocalyptic traditions. Building on these presupposed associations, and the

intersections between Christ and Pan shown earlier in the study, it is argued that Pan is the implied Satan in the wilderness temptation. Several details in the story of the Gerasene demoniac resemble features of Pan and his mytho-space, with cosmic and political overtones, suggesting associations to Pan.

This study shows that the myths, cult, and features of Pan thematically, theologically, and geographically intersected with those of Jesus, as presented in Mark, and suggests that this most likely led to comparison, negotiations, and polemic mimicry, which can be discerned in the text of Mark's gospel. The study confirms and strengthens previous research that emphasizes the importance of geography, and spatial aspects in Mark, and sheds new light on Markan Christology and discourses of nature, relevant for ecological interpretations of Mark.

Keywords: Gospel of Mark, Pan, Ecological Hermeneutics, Eco-criticism, Reception Exegesis, agrarian culture, agrarianism, imperial ideology, pastoral poetry, Greco-Roman religion, nature discourses, Satan, demon, Environmental History

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1 Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

Christ is the Lord of Nature, like Pan the universal God.

Jean Jacques Boissard (1528-1602)¹

This study is sparked by my observation of two distinct phenomena. The first is the attempts in recent biblical scholarship to re-examine the Christian bible from an ecological perspective with the purpose to probe the texts for possible implications on the urgent questions of ecological and environmental challenges. The second is the literary trope recurring in Western literature and art: Christ identified with, or as antagonist to, Pan the Greek god of nature and shepherds. Throughout the history of Pan, from his ancient origin in the bucolic landscapes of Greek Arcadia, through his symbolic and philosophical import as universal god of All (τὰ πάντα, with a pun on his name), to his various appearances in Western art and literature, this hybrid deity is an often-used symbol and embodiment of nature.

By bringing together the growing interest in re-examining biblical texts with attention to ideas of nature and ecology, and the recurring comparison of Christ and Pan in reception history, this thesis raises the question how the New Testament portrays Jesus in relation to the cult of Pan in the Greco-Roman cultural context. The framing of the cult of Pan, the god of nature, in relation to the New Testament, provides a lens through which we can discern how human-nature-god relations were negotiated in the cultural matrix in which the New Testament was formed and spread. This lens also stimulates new perspectives on ecological interpretations of the New Testament. As a study in reception-exegesis, this thesis in addition contributes to a methodological development of this field.

1.2 Aims and Purposes

In the light of the juxtaposition of Christ and Pan, evident in reception history (as will soon be presented), I will examine the god Pan and his cult,

¹ *De Divinatione et Magicis Praestigiis*. Quoted in Schoff, Wilfred H. 'Tammuz, Pan and Christ'. *The Open Court* 1912.9 (1912): 449-460. 455.

the connections to the political powers, the philosophical cosmologies, geo-theological aspects, and to presentations of Jesus in the New Testament, primarily the gospel of Mark. My aim is to show how this can be relevant for the historical context of Mark, mainly in relation to chapters six and nine. My purpose for this study is to sharpen the awareness of nature-discourses in the New Testament presentations of Jesus, which have been generally overlooked until recently by biblical scholars and Christian readings, but which are urgently necessary in a time of ecological crisis and an awakened interest in “green” readings of the Christian Bible.

The question I pose in this study is thus: is the Christ-Pan comparison, which is evident from at least the 4th century and onwards in Western literature, of interpretive value for the New Testament context? If so, how might this comparison have been implied in the text? My proposition is that the polemic between Pan and Christ found in Eusebius and indicated in other early sources of Christianity rests not only on peculiar chronological or etymological coincidences, but is present in the New Testament context, and likely alluded to in the New Testament text. Moreover, a comparison of Jesus and Pan – the god of nature and fecundity – puts issues of creation/nature in relation to Jesus and his ministry to the fore in the reading of Mark.

This study aims to make a contribution both to historical research, using interpretations from reception history to shed light on the text in its historical context, and to the contemporary discourse of ecological interpretations of the Bible. It contributes to previous studies of Mark that focus on influences from Greco-Roman literature and the social, cultural, and political environment, and sheds light on Markan Christology, theology, and rhetoric. The historical contextualization of this study, with its focus on how religious, political, and social issues intersected with ideas of cosmos, nature, and landscape, provides a non-modern perspective on contemporary modern framings of the “environment” and “nature” and its crisis. Before laying out the methods and theories for this study, I will now present the god Pan and the juxtaposition between this deity and Christ in Western history.

1.3 Introducing Pan

*Muse, tell me about Pan...Through wooded glades he wanders
with dancing nymphs who foot it on some sheer cliff's edge,
calling upon Pan, the shepherd-god, long-haired, unkempt. He
has every snowy crest and the mountain peaks and rocky crests
for his domain; hither and thither he goes through the close
thickets, now lured by soft streams, and now he presses on
amongst towering crags and climbs up to the highest peak that
overlooks the flocks.*

(Homeric *Hymn to Pan*)²

Pan is a rustic deity with his origins in Greek Arcadia. He is at home in the rural landscapes and the wilderness; on mountain tops and in grottos.³ He was originally worshipped as god of forests, pastures, flocks, and shepherds. Pan is associated with music (famously playing his flute, the *syrinx*), with dance, laughter, and festivity, and is generally depicted as a hairy, bearded figure with horns, puck nose, tail, goat's-feet/legs, and a human torso. In Pan, the divine and the bestial coexist, and are manifested through his powers that ambiguously oscillate between panic fear and seductive love, chaos, and harmony. His cult is often shared with Nymphs in caves and grottos and beautiful natural locations.

The cult of Pan was introduced in Athens at the time of the battle of Marathon (490 BCE). As told by Herodotus, Pan intervened to the benefits of the Greeks, after the messenger Philippides encountered Pan who promised his help against the Persians. In return, the Greeks installed a sanctuary at the slope of the Acropolis and honoured him with annual festivals and games.⁴ In this story, and recurring in other sources, Pan's sudden appearance is associated with fear.⁵ After his introduction in Athens, his cult spread rapidly throughout the Greek world. In first-century Roman Palestine, one of the main centres of Pan-worship was the cave and sanctuary of Pan, the *paneion*, from where the Jordan River sprung, at the foot of Mount Hermon in Paneas/Caesarea Philippi, the city of Pan.⁶ In front of the cave of Pan, Herod the Great built a temple to Augustus.

² Homeric *Hymn to Pan* 19, English translation by Hugh G. Evelyn-White, 1914.

³ Borgeaud, Philippe. *The Cult of Pan in Ancient Greece*. Trans. Kathleen Atlass and James Redfield. University of Chicago Press, 1988. 8-9.

⁴ See 2.6.1 below.

⁵ Borgeaud, *Cult of Pan*, 88-116; 120. Elaborated in section 2.10.

⁶ I.e., the cult site on the rock plateau at the foot of Mount Hermon, close to the ancient city kernel (see 2.10.1).

According to the gospel narratives, Jesus and his disciples went to this territory (Mk 8:27; Mt 16:13).

In the philosophical tradition of Neo-Platonism, Stoicism and the mystical Orphic tradition, Pan was identified with the cosmic All.⁷ As the environmental historian Donald Hughes points out, the god Pan “was recognized as universal god of nature”, and became “Great Pan, the ‘all-god’, nature personified, who ruled ‘all-things’”. Hughes remarks that “*ta panta*, [is] the closest word in ancient Greek to what is today termed as the ‘natural environment’”.⁸

In Roman pastoral literature, Pan is often a part of the scenery in representations of wild locales and the countryside, as shepherd and among shepherds. Pan is associated with, or even personifies, fecundity of nature and fertility, especially of flocks.⁹ In some sources, Pan is associated with the sea as *haliplangtos* “sea-roaming”, and with fishermen.¹⁰ In Greek myth, Pan assists Zeus to defeat the cosmic sea-monster Typhon.¹¹

1.3.1 Christ and Pan in Reception History

*And this happened at the time of the death of Christ Jesus, who
is the true Pan, father of all things and lord of all Nature,
whom the mythologists meant under the symbol of Pan.*

Petrus Daniel Huetius (1630-1721)¹²

In reception history, Pan is recurrently identified with Christ, usually based on both being universal gods of all things, and shepherd deities. Simultaneously, Pan becomes the antagonist to Christ as the demon or Satan (featuring Pan-like horns, tail, and cloven hooves). According to most interpreters, these two, seemingly incompatible literary themes – Pan-Christ and Pan-demon – have their basis in a remarkable story in Plutarch’s *De Defectu Oraculorum* 17, a treatise featured in his work *Moralia*, likely written in 83 CE, in which a pilot on a ship on the way from Italy to Greece, hears a voice announcing that “The great Pan is

⁷ See 2.7.5 below.

⁸ Hughes, J. Donald. *Environmental Problems of the Greeks and Romans: Ecology in the Ancient Mediterranean*. John Hopkins University Press, 2014. 46. I agree with Hughes that the expression τὰ πάντα with the definite article was the common expression to refer to “the universe” or “the whole of creation” (See *BDAG*, ‘πᾶς, πᾶσα, πᾶν’, 2 b β).

⁹ “The goat-god is the indispensable patron of the fertility of small flocks.” Borgeaud, *The Cult of Pan*, 75.

¹⁰ Borgeaud, *The Cult of Pan*, 60 note 154.

¹¹ See 2.11.

¹² *Demonstratio Evangelica* vol II, 931. Quoted in Schoff, ‘Tammuz, Pan and Christ’, 456.

dead”.¹³ This occurred during the reign of Tiberius who, according to Plutarch, got very upset on hearing the death-report, and had his learned men investigate the matter. Some 200 years after Plutarch, the church historian Eusebius takes up this story and uses it for apologetic purposes in *Praeparatio Evangelica*. Eusebius uses the opportunity to make the argument that the earthly ministry of Christ entailed a victory over Pan and all demons out of the conjuncture in time of the death of Pan, and the time of Jesus’ earthly life, as we can see from Eusebius’ comment on Plutarch’s story:

For it was the time of Tiberius, in which our Saviour, making His sojourn among men, is recorded to have been ridding human life from daemons of every kind so that there were some of them now kneeling before Him and beseeching Him not to deliver them over to the Tartarus that awaited them. You have therefor the date of the overthrow of the daemons, of which there was no record at any other time; just as you had the abolition of human sacrifice among the Gentiles as not having occurred until after the preaching of the doctrine of the Gospel had reached mankind. Let then these refutations from history suffice.¹⁴

For Eusebius, Christ’s ministry on earth effectuated the overthrowing of “daemons of every kind/πᾶν γένος δαιμόνων”. With the wordplay on Pan’s name, Eusebius makes Pan a symbol or representative of “all daemons”. Moreover, Eusebius’ account of the demons “γονυπετεῖν αὐτὸν καὶ ἱκετεύειν μὴ τῷ περιμένοντι αὐτοὺς Ταρτάρῳ παραδοῦναι (kneeling before Him and beseeching Him not to deliver them over to the Tartarus)” most likely alludes to the gospel narratives of the gerasean/gadaran exorcism of the demons into the pigs, in which the demons (in Luke’s version) beg Jesus not to throw them into the abyss.¹⁵ Thus, for Eusebius, Pan is reduced to a demon, or a symbol of all demons and by implication all pagan gods, exorcised by Christ. Pan and Christ are opposites. However, from the Renaissance and onwards, Eusebius’ polemical and oppositional interpretation of Pan’s death lived on in the history of

¹³ “The sum of all this evidence points strongly to A.D. 83 as the dramatic date of the dialogue with A.D. 87 and A.D. 79 as outside possibilities.” (Ogilvie, Robert M. ‘The Date of the ‘De Defectu Oraculorum’’. *Phoenix* 21.2 (1967): 108-119. 119.) Borgeaud, however, suggests that it was introduced in the second century CE (Borgeaud, Philippe. ‘The Death of the Great Pan: The Problem of Interpretation’. *History of Religions* 22.3 (1983): 254-283, 254).

Plutarch’s account is quoted in full and further discussed in Appendix.

¹⁴ Eusebius *Preap. Ev.* 5.17.13-14. (English translation *LCL*).

¹⁵ καὶ παρεκάλουν αὐτὸν ἵνα μὴ ἐπιτάξῃ αὐτοῖς εἰς τὴν ἄβυσσον ἀπελθεῖν (“They begged him not to order them to go back into the abyss”, Lk 8:31).

interpretation alongside an interpretation of similarity and identification: Pan *as* Christ who died in the time of Tiberius.

In the intellectual milieu of the Renaissance, according to which ancient pagan gods and philosophical notions contained a seed of truth and foreshadowed the full revelation of the gospel, Pan could be identified with Christ – the real Pan. In the 15th century, the Italian humanist Paulus Marsus (1440-1484) interprets the story in Plutarch so that the lament of the death of Pan, was in fact the outcry of the death of Christ, “who, with a voice miraculously issuing forth from the solitude of the desert rocks...announcing that the Lord was dead.”¹⁶ Thus, Marsus identifies Pan with Christ, with the following reasoning:

Now what does Pan mean, if not all. Thus, the lord of all and universal nature had died. Truly we are dealing with the Pan of whom better [is said] by Theodosius [Macrobius] when he says [he is] not the lord of the woods, but the ruler of the material substance of the universe ... The strength of whose nature forms the essence of universal bodies whether they are divine or earthly. (Paulus Marsus Commentary on *Fasti* I, 397)¹⁷

With these two interpretations of the “death of Pan”-story as inspiration, in subsequent Western history of literature, “an army of commentators, taking their text from Plutarch, and their gloss from Eusebius (Pan-demon) or from the tradition represented by Paulus Marsus (Pan-Christ), opted for one or the other”, as Patricia Merivale states in her thorough work on the reception history of Pan in literature.¹⁸ Marsus’ identification of Pan with Christ is further elaborated by Francois Rabelais (1494-1553) who takes up Virgil’s Pan, the good shepherd, and compares it with the good shepherd Jesus in the New Testament. Rabelais’ character Pantagruel explains Plutarch’s story thus:

For my part, I understand it [i.e., the death of Pan] of that Great Saviour of the Faithful, who was shamefully put to death at Jerusalem... And methinks my interpretation is not improper; for He may lawfully be said, in the Greek tongue, to be Pan, since he is our All. For all that we are, all that we live, all that we have, all that we hope, is Him, by Him, from Him, and in Him; He is the Good Pan, the Great Shepherd; who, as the loving Shepherd

¹⁶ Cited in Merivale, Patricia. *Pan the Goat-God: His Myth in Modern Times*. Harvard University Press, 1969. 13.

¹⁷ Merivale, *Pan the Goat-God*, 13. The etymological connection of the god Πάν and πᾶν (all) can be traced back to Plato and is a significant theme in stoic and Orphic literature, to which we come back later.

¹⁸ Merivale, *Pan the Goat-God*, 14. Merivale’s work is mainly on English literature.

Corydon affirms, hath not only tender Love and Affection for his sheep, but also for their Shepherds. At his Death, Complaints, Sighs, Fears and Lamentations were spread through the whole Fabric of Universe, whether Heaven, land, Sea, or Hell. (Rabelais, *The Life of Gargantua and Pantagruel*, 4.28. English translation Urquhart and Motteux, 1894.)

According to M.A. Screech (1926-2018), scholar of French literature, Rabelais' linking of Pan the god of shepherds and Christ the good shepherd is not dependent on Eusebius' interpretation of the story of the death of Pan in Plutarch.¹⁹ Already in medieval times, says Screech,

noëls had fused into one those shepherds abiding in the fields, keeping watch over their flocks by night, with poetic shepherds deriving in most cases eventually from Virgil [...] From this it is but one step to associate with Pan, the God of the Shepherds, the Christ Child himself.²⁰

Moreover, Rabelais fuses Christ-Pan the good shepherd with the interpretation of Pan the Lord of All things as Christ.²¹ Acquainted with classic literature as the Renaissance humanists were, in a time of awaked nostalgia of the antiquity, Rabelais draws on Stoic allegorical exegesis of Pan.²² Screech again:

The Stoics were, of course, pantheists; this led them to interpret allegorically the gods of the ancient world, Pan as God of All things was a Stoic commonplace. Rabelais, inspired by this Stoic exegesis, adapts it to a moving Christian climax, noticeable Pauline in flavour [...] It is left to Rabelais to make Christ the Christians' ALL in a personal, all-pervading, Pauline sense ... 'For all that we are, all that we live, all that we have, all that we hope, is Him, by Him, from Him, and in Him; He is the Good Pan, the Great Shepherd' There are many texts of Paul that could have inspired Rabelais here.²³

Screech notes the similarities between Rabelais' thought and Paul's speech in Acts 17:25-28 with the quotation from the Stoic poet Aratus

¹⁹ Screech, M.A. 'The Death of Pan and the Death of Heroes in the Fourth Book of Rabelais: A Study in Syncretism.' *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance*, T.17, No 1 (1955), 37. In his article on the comparison of Christ and Pan in reception history, William Irwin states: "For this community of gods, the most obvious, and probably the most enduring, is their embodiment as the good shepherd." (Irwin, William R. 'The survival of Pan'. *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America* (1961): 159-167. 163.)

²⁰ Screech, 'The Death of Pan', 44.

²¹ Screech, 'The Death of Pan', 52.

²² Screech, 'The Death of Pan', 52. Pan as universal god of All in Stoic and Orpheic traditions will be further explored below.

²³ Screech, 'The Death of Pan', 52.



Ill. 1. Luca Signorelli, 'The School of Pan', Florence, c. 1490.

(*Phaenomena*). Screech points also to other texts “doubtless in Rabelais’ mind”: 1 Cor 8:6; Eph 1:22-23; Col 1:15-17; 3:11, and Acts 10:36. He concludes that “Rabelais, in introducing a stoic element into Christian thought, was in fact following a tendency operative in Paul himself.”²⁴ In other words, Rabelais, like Paul (or the author of Acts), draws from Stoic philosophy to make a theological argument. The use of Pan for Christ, Screech suggests, is also pertinent since Stoic interpretation of Pan’s dual nature – symbolizing Pan’s role of linking heaven and earth – corresponds to allegorical interpretations of the dual nature of Christ as both divine and earthly, God and human.²⁵ Besides Rabelais’, a range of similar

²⁴ Screech, ‘The Death of Pan’, 52-53 note 5.

²⁵ Screech, ‘The Death of Pan’, 53. Pan’s dual nature and cosmic role is discernible in Luca Signorelli’s painting *The School of Pan* (see ill. 1), in which an enthroned royal Pan with a shepherd’s crook, horns like lunar crescents, and a cloak sprinkled with stars, resembling stoic allegorical interpretations of cosmic Pan. Cf., Servius Horatius (400th century) commentary on Virgil, *Ecl II*: “Pan is a rustic god formed in the likeness of Nature, which is why he is called Pan, which means ‘All’. His horns are like the rays of the sun and the horns of the moon: his face is ruddy like the morning air; His mule-skin breast-plate is covered with stars; his lower parts bristle with hair like thickets and foliage and the fur of animals; his goat’s feet reflect the solidity of the earth. He carries a flute with seven reeds for the seven harmonious voices of the heavens, and a

interpretations of Pan as Christ cropped up in the 16th century and beyond. A few more examples will suffice.²⁶ In Eclogue of July in *The Shepherds Calender*, Edmund Spenser (1552-1599) implicitly identifies Pan with Christ as the good Shepherd:

Morrell:

And wonned [lived] not the great God Pan Upon Mount Olivet;
Feeding the blessed Flock of Dan, Which did himself beget?

Thomalin:

O blessed Sheep! O Shepherd great! That bought his Flock so dear:
And them did save with bloody Sweat, From Wolves that would
them tear.

The Virgilian/Rabelaisian Pan the good shepherd identified with Christ, makes it possible by analogy to identify monarchs – as earthly representatives of Christ the Shepherd – with Pan, as in Ben Jonson's pastoral masque *Pan's Anniversaire*. This political panegyric to King James, situates the king as Pan. Pan/James is praised with a hymn that alludes to the King's pastoral role as good shepherd, both as head of the church and bringer of civilization, fertility, and peace:²⁷

And come, you prime Arcadians forth, that taught By Pan the rites
of true society, From his loud music all your manners wrought,
And made your commonwealth a harmony.²⁸

And later in the play:

shepherd's crook, which revolves back upon itself like the seasons of the year. Because he is the god of Nature, the poets say he fought with Love and lost, because Love conquers All." And Cornutus (1st century): "[Pan] is hairy and goat-like in his lower parts because of the roughness of the earth; his upper parts have the form of a human, because the ruling part of the cosmos, which is rational, is in the aether [...] he is clad in fawn-skin or leopard-skin because of the variety of the stars" (See 2.11). Cornutus, *Epidrome*, 27. English translation: Boys-Stones, George. *L. Annaeus Cornutus: Greek Theology, Fragments, and Testimonia*. SBL Press, 2018.

²⁶ For more extended studies on the history of medieval and modern Pan, see Irwin, William R. 'The Survival of Pan'. *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America* (1961): 159-167; Merivale, *Pan the Goat-God*; Bourgead, 'Death', 254-283; Robichaud, Paul. *Pan: The Great God's Modern Return*. Reaktion Books, 2021. For depictions of Pan in artistic media, see Boardman, John. *The Great God Pan: The Survival of an Image*. Vol. 29. Thames and Hudson, 1997.

²⁷ See Butler, Martin. 'Ben Jonson's Pan's Anniversaire and the Politics of Early Stuart Pastoral'. *English Literary Renaissance* 22.3 (1992): 369-404; Robichaud, *Pan*, 58-60; Merivale, *Pan the Goat-God*, 19.

²⁸ Ben Jonson, *Pan's Anniversaire; or, The Shepherd's Holiday*, in *English Masques*, ed. Herbert Arthur Evans (London, 1897). 166. Quoted in Robichaud, *Pan*, 59.

Pan is our All, by him we breathe, we live, We move, we are; 'tis
he our lambs doth rear, Our flocks doth bless, and from the store
doth give, The warm and finer fleeces that we wear.²⁹

And later again Pan/James is praised as “Great Pan, the father of our peace and pleasure”.³⁰ Jonson’s use of the stoic and orphic Pan as providence of nature and cosmic lord of All – simultaneously alluding to New Testament formulations to God/Christ – gives Pan/James/Christ the role as transcendental source of order and harmony.³¹

Still in England, about a decade later, in the *Hymn on the Morning of Christ’s Nativity* John Milton identifies Pan with Christ:

The shepherds on the lawn, / Or ere the point of dawn, / Sate
simply chatting in a rustic row; Full little thought they than / That
the mighty Pan / Was kindly come to live with them below.

(Hymn on the Morning of Christ’s Nativity viii, 85-90)

In Milton’s later works, however, Pan is associated with the sexual aspects of the devil.³²

Various aspects of Pan’s dual nature have shown up in Western history. The shaggy and sexual aspects were of course inappropriate to connect to Christ or his earthly representatives, but the bestial character of Pan is occasionally exploited in Pan-Christ identifications, as in Giles Fletcher’s *Christus Victor and Triumph*:

Ah, foolish Shepherds! Who were wont t’esteeem,/Your God all
rough, and shaggy-hair’d be;/And yey far wiser Shepherds than ye
deem,/For who so poor (tho’ who so rich) as He,/When sojourning
with us in low degree,/He wash’d his flocks in Jordan’s spotless
tide. (IV,xxxvii)³³

The ambiguity of Pan-Christ and Pan-devil is reflected by theologians as well, who sometimes use the one, sometimes the other, and sometimes leave the paradox as it is, as the protestant minister Pierre du Moulin, who comments on Plutarch’s story: “voices of demons who knew that the death

²⁹ (166-167), quoted in Robichaud, *Pan*, 59.

³⁰ Robichaud, *Pan*, 59-60.

³¹ Butler, “Pan’s Anniversary”, 374-375. As we will see, the connection between royalty and fertility is ancient and was active in notably Roman imperial ideology, Jewish royal ideology, and most likely implied in depictions of Jesus as king/shepherd in the New Testament (see 4.7.1).

³² Merivale, *Pan the Goat-God*, 28-29.

³³ Quoted in Merivale, *Pan the Goat-God*, 28.

of Christ had ended the reign of Satan [but Pan] might also mean Christ himself, All in All (Paul, 1 Cor xv. 28).” (*Vates* Part III ch. 11.)³⁴

After the 17th century, examples of the Pan-Christ trope are rare, and during the 18th and 19th centuries, Pan was employed, without (clear) connections to Christ, by writers, such as William Blake (1757-1827), Lord Byron (1788-1824), Thomas Love Peacock (1785-1866), Robert Louis Stevenson (1850-1894) and Oscar Wilde (1854-1900) to represent sexual desire, music, wild nature, the duality and contradictions of the world, and the cosmic power intuited in nature. Pan’s death symbolized the end of a pagan mode of perceiving meaning and beauty in nature, and a nostalgic longing for a return of this mode of consciousness, as a reaction to the strict rationality of the enlightenment and bourgeois rigidity of Victorianism.³⁵

In the 20th century a version of Eusebius’ interpretation shows up again in the apologetic work *The Everlasting Man* by the catholic writer G. K. Chesterton (1874-1936):

It is said truly in a sense that Pan died because Christ was born. It is almost as true in another sense that men knew that Christ was born because Pan was already dead. A void was made by the vanishing world of the whole mythology of mankind, which would have asphyxiated like a vacuum if it had not been filled with theology.³⁶

I take as one final and most recent example from the work of the orthodox theologian Evagrius Lampert (1914-2004):

With the coming of the God-man and Saviour Jesus Christ, with his death on Golgotha there took place a shattering and mighty exorcism of the cosmos and Nature from within: ‘Great Pan has died’, the demonic possession of Nature is forthwith broken, the Prince of this world is driven out, and Nature awaits her final transformation in the eschatological fulfilment [...] Christ could not have fulfilled his cosmic exorcism, if Nature were not herself an ever-living witness to the Holy Spirit, whereby she cries in man and through man: ‘Abba, Father!’³⁷

³⁴ Quoted in Schoff, ‘Tammuz, Pan and Christ’, 456.

³⁵ Robichaud, *Pan*, chapter 3.

³⁶ Chesterton, G.K. *The Everlasting Man*. Ignatius Press, 1993.

³⁷ Lampert, Eugeny. *The Divine Realm: Towards a Theology of the Sacraments*. Faber & Faber, 1943. 116. This theological notion, I argue, comes close to the idea in the New Testament that nature and the whole of cosmos is governed by demonic forces, and that the ministry, death, and resurrection of Christ entailed a cosmic exorcism and inaugurated a reconciliation of τὰ πάντα, the whole creation.

For Lampert, Chesterton, and many before him, Pan symbolizes the demonic possession of the universe, or (false) paganism and even the devil (in line with Eusebius), while for other more syncretic-minded interpreters, Pan and Christ are the same: the Lord of All nature and the good shepherd, at home in rural countryside and mountainous wilderness. Could this ambivalent relation between these two deities have been negotiated in the cultural environment of the New Testament, and is it discernible in the New Testament texts?

With one word, Pan represents “Nature”, in all its aspects: the universal force of the celestial bodies, the dynamic force of natural processes, the growing force in plants and the fertility of flocks, the pastoral landscape of utopian Arcadia, and the countryside (as opposed to urban civilization from which man continuously has tried to escape). Could Pan, as a kind of incarnated deity – bridging the divine, human, and nature – provide a locus, or lens, to explore how these aspects were negotiated in relation to Christ in the New Testament? It is not the task of this study to fully analyse or contextualize the texts above, nor to present any possible line of inspiration or tradition from antiquity to modern times. It is, however, worth noting a few more sources that indicate that Pan was not forgotten during the long period between Eusebius and the renaissance,³⁸ nor that Pan was irrelevant for Christians before Eusebius.

A silver Cross brooch dated to 6th – 7th century features the head of Pan in profile engraved on a carnelian, in the centre of the silver cross. This item was found in northern Italy and was likely carried by a Christian (presumably wealthy) woman as a coat buckle.³⁹ It could be a peculiar historical hapax, that the pagan god Pan (obviously still alive) is portrayed in the centre of a Christian symbol, but it is also possible that this item reflects an idea of an amalgamation of Christ and Pan, similar to what we find in texts several centuries later.

Unexpectedly, perhaps, Pan also shows up in another artistic source, in the illustrated Stuttgart Psalter, dated to around 9th century.⁴⁰ In this scene from Psalm 77/78 verses 51-52 illustrating the exodus from Egypt through the wilderness, Pan lurks in the lower right corner of the painting (see ill. 2). Maybe he simply represents the wilderness, which was Pan’s locale, or

³⁸ As far as we can tell from available textual sources, between Eusebius and early renaissance, we have no evidence of a juxtaposition of Pan and Christ.

³⁹ Hahn, Sylvia und Hans Jürgen Arnold. *Kreuz und Kruzifix Zeichen und Bild*. Diözesanmuseum Freising, 2005, 138. I would like to thank Dr. Barbara Crostini for pointing me to this material.

⁴⁰ See Davezac, Bertrand M. Maurice. *The Stuttgart Psalter: Its pre-Carolingian Sources and its Place in Carolingian Art*. Columbia University, 1972. 38. The exact dating is not crucial for our purposes.

perhaps it alludes to his affinity with shepherds (verse 52 reads “Then he led out his people like sheep and guided them in the wilderness like a flock”). Given the general theme of moral battles and conquest of evil forces in the Stuttgart Psalter, Pan’s appearance more likely represents moral temptations to be defeated (note the weapons!), likely allegorized by the goat demons (*seirim*) or the desert-demon Azazel in the Hebrew Bible.⁴¹

In any case, we have examples of Pan’s presence in copies of the Christian Bible, and Pan’s image amalgamated with the Christian symbol in the time between Eusebius and Marsus, from which we unfortunately lack textual evidence of any Pan-demon or Pan-Christ motif.⁴² There are, moreover, indications that a polemic between Christ and Pan, taken up by Eusebius, was present on the stage in Early Christianity.



Ill. 2. Illustration in Stuttgart Psalter.

⁴¹ See Openshaw, Kathleen M. 'Weapons in the Daily Battle: Images of the Conquest of Evil in the Early Medieval Psalter'. *The Art Bulletin* 75.1 (1993): 17-38.

The connections between Pan and goat-like demonic beings will be explored in section 3.6.

⁴² Isidor of Seville (c. 560-636) describes Pan but makes no connection to Christ/demon/Satan. (*Etymologiae* III.xx.5; VIII.xi.81).

1.3.2 Pan in Early Christian Texts

We find references to Pan and his annual cult in Rome in the texts of Clement of Alexandria.⁴³ In a polemical context in *Protrepticus*, Clement refutes the pagan “wicked worship of demons”, and takes Pan as one of his primary examples of an “invented” (and thus false) god: “The Athenians, again, knew not who Pan was till Philippides told them.”⁴⁴ From this, we can at least say that it is presumed that the reader of Clement’s texts is familiar with the myths and cults of Pan.

Some scholars point to an interesting appearance of Pan in Irenaeus’ polemical treatise *Adversus Haereses* (3.16.1):

The Valentinians, again, maintain that the dispensational Jesus was the same who passed through Mary, upon whom that Saviour from the more exalted [region] descended, who was also termed Pan, because He possessed the names of all those who had produced Him; but that [this latter] shared with Him.

In this text, it is pointed out, the Christian apologist fights the notion held by the Gnostic Valentinians, that Pan was identified with Jesus (or rather the Christ in the bodily Jesus).⁴⁵ If this translation⁴⁶ reflects the Greek original, we could derive from Irenaeus’ refutation a notion among the Valentinians that syncretized the spiritual “higher” being of Christ (separated from the bodily Jesus) with Pan, as he was interpreted in the platonic and Orphic tradition, as the cosmic “All”. This is not unlikely since heterodox Christians such as Valentinians incorporated platonic and Orpheic mysticism in their Christian belief. However, the Greek text of this passage has not survived, and the English translation rests on the Latin translation in which no reference to Pan is made. “Pan” in this text is likely an intrusion made by the modern translator. Perhaps the word “all” (*omnium*) triggered an allusion to Pan and made the translator insert “Pan” in his translation. In any case, we should probably consider this to be an example of the 19th century Christ-Pan juxtaposition discourse.⁴⁷

⁴³ Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis* I.108.3; II.5.22; III.7.60; V.14.97; *Protrepticus* 58.2.

⁴⁴ Clement of Alexandria, *Protrepticus* 44.3.

⁴⁵ Wilson, John Francis. *Caesarea Philippi: Baniyas, the Lost City of Pan*. IB Tauris, 2004. 89. and Kulik, Alexander. ‘How the Devil Got His Hooves and Horns: The Origin of the Motif and the Implied Demonology of 3 Baruch’. *Numen* 60.2-3 (2013): 195-229. 204 note 14.

⁴⁶ Roberts, Alexander/Rambaut, W. H., 1868. *The Writings of Irenaeus*. Vol. I. (Ante-Nicene Christian Library 5).

⁴⁷ The Latin text reads: “Qui autem a Valentino sunt, Iesum quidem qui sit ex dispositione, ipsum esse qui per Mariam transierit, in quem illum de superiori Salvatore descendisse, quem et Christum dici, quoniam omnium qui emisissent eum haberet vocabula”. I would like to thank Martin Leutzsch for pointing this out to me.

Returning to Eusebius, we find that Pan is discussed not only in relation to the story in Plutarch. Before this story comes up, Eusebius challenges the pagan philosopher Porphyry's description of Pan as "the symbol of the universe".⁴⁸ In his counter argument, Eusebius uses an oracle quoted by Porphyry himself to prove that Pan is not at all the symbol of the universe, but only a demon as described by the oracle.⁴⁹ Eusebius also refutes Porphyry's claim that Pan is a "good daemon", again using Porphyry's own quotation of an oracle that speaks of Pan's frantic acting upon some woodsmen that almost got frightened to death at the sight of the god.⁵⁰ This is turned by Eusebius to an argument that Pan is an evil demon, and not a good one. It is with the same argumentative fashion that Eusebius then goes on to reason, from Plutarch's witness that Pan died during the reign of Tiberius, that Pan was one of the demons – perhaps the demon *par excellence* – who was exorcized through Jesus' ministry.

Moreover, Eusebius' recounts a story about a certain Astyrius of Caesarea Maritima, a renowned Roman senator, and seemingly a Christian devotee. On a visit to Paneas/Caesarea Philippi, he challenges the demon of Paneas and by pleading to Christ, he miraculously defeats it:

Near Caesarea Philippi, called Paneas by the Phoenicians, on the skirts of the mountain called Paneum, they point to springs believed to be the source of the Jordan. Into these they say that on a certain feast day a victim is thrown, and that by the demon's power it disappears from sight miraculously. This occurrence strikes the onlookers as a marvel to be talked of everywhere. One day Astyrius was there while this was going on, and when he saw that the business amazed the crowd, he pitied their delusion, and looking up to heaven pleaded through Christ with God who is over all to refute the demon who was deluding the people and stop them from being deceived. When he had offered his prayer, it is said that the sacrifice instantly came to the surface of the water. Thus, their miracle was gone, and nothing marvellous ever again happened on that spot. (Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, 6.16-17)

⁴⁸ Eusebius *PE*, 3.11.

⁴⁹ "To Pan, a god of kindred race, / A mortal born my vows I pay; / Whose horned brows and cloven feet / And goat-like legs his lust betray." Eusebius *PE*, 3.14.124a. (Quoted in Wilson, *Caesarea Philippi*, 88).

⁵⁰ "Lo! Where the golden-horned Pan / In study of Dionysos' train / Leaps o'er the mountains' wooded slopes! / His right hand holds a shepherd's staff, / His left a smooth shrill-breathing pipe, / That charms the gentle wood-nymph's soul. / But at the sound of that strange song / Each startled woodsman dropp'd his axe, / And all in frozen terror gaze'd / Upon the Daemon's frantic course. / Death's icy hand had seiz'd them all, / Had not the huntress Artemis / In anger stay'd his furious might, / To her address thy prayer for aid." Eusebius *PE*, 6.190 b-c. (Quoted in Wilson, *Caesarea Philippi*, 89).

Though Eusebius does not call the demon by the name Pan, it is very likely that the place of the sacrifice was the cave of Pan, on the day of the annual festival of Pan.⁵¹ Francis Wilson comments on this story that

[t]he contest between Astyrius and Pan (or really, between Pan and Christ) becomes paradigmatic, a dramatic representation of the struggle that would grip the city for many generations. It was, in a sense, a contest eventually won primarily by the Christians active in the city who belonged to the party that enjoyed the favour of imperial policy.⁵²

Wilson suggests that the event in Paneas told by Eusebius reflects a polemic between the pagans and the Christian community in Paneas, a community that “appears to have been a major centre in the development of Christianity”, and “arrived in Banias during its earliest period.”⁵³

If the cult of Pan was alive and well-known in the Roman Empire, including Palestine, by the time of Jesus’ ministry, and by the time when the stories of Jesus were composed, it makes a closer examination of a possible connection between Pan and Jesus in the historical and geographical context of the gospel stories interesting. The most reasonable place to start such an examination is in the earliest source of the stories of Jesus – the gospel of Mark. And the closest point of contact seems to be the narrative about Jesus’ visit to the area of Caesarea Philippi, a place of geo-political and geo-theological significance, as we will see. The juxtaposing of Pan and Christ in reception history also motivate a study of similarities and contrasts of features and functions between the two divine figures, and how this may have been implied in Mark’s gospel.

1.4 Previous Research

As a literary trope in Western history, the Pan-Christ juxtaposition has been studied by historians of literature as I have presented above, and to some extent by historians of religion, but to my knowledge, there is no thorough academic study focusing on Pan related to the New Testament.⁵⁴ One obvious impediment for such a study, and perhaps one of the reasons

⁵¹ Wilson, *Caesarea Philippi*, 85-86.

⁵² Wilson, *Caesarea Philippi*, 86.

⁵³ Wilson, *Caesarea Philippi*, 83.

⁵⁴ Parallels between Pan and Jesus of the gospels are, however, acknowledged in various non-academic articles and blogposts, often referring to Peter’s confession in Matt 16:13-19 and to the historical and geographic context of the Cult of Pan in Caesarea Philippi.

for the lack of previous research, is that Πάν⁵⁵ is not explicitly mentioned in the New Testament, and thus, a point of contact is hard to detect, or at least difficult to prove. Nevertheless, commentators on the gospel narratives about Jesus' ministry around Caesarea Philippi usually mention the cult of Pan at this location, and some remark on the fact that Herod the Great built and dedicated a temple to Augustus at the *Paneion*.⁵⁶ Few, if any commentators, however, make any point out of it in the interpretation of the text.

The works of Sean Freyne provide valuable perspectives on the economic, social, geographical, and ecological context of Jesus' journeys in the Galilean landscape and surrounding regions.⁵⁷ In *Jesus: A Jewish Galilean*, Freyne follows the historical Jesus in his mission from the geographical centre around the sea of Galilee, to different "micro-ecologies" of the regions he visits, asking how the historical Jesus "might have reacted to the different natural [...] environments that he would have encountered on his travels" and "how his experience of and reflections on these regional variations have coloured his actual sense of his ministry and mission in the light of the received tradition".⁵⁸ Freyne provides an important ecological perspective on the gospel stories, particularly the ecological importance of Hermon for Galilean life. He observes that

⁵⁵ The enticing similarity between "Πάν" and "παν", that has inspired the etymological connection between Pan and "All" in various ways, and can be found in abundance in sources from antiquity and beyond, might suggest a closer study of the occurrences of "παν" with variants in Mark (and the rest of the New Testament). Such a study, however, would be futile since the use of πα/παν/παν etc. is obviously very common and generally carry no connotations or allusions to Pan. A few interesting exceptions might be Mark 9:12; Acts 17:25-26; 1 Cor 8:6; Eph 4:6; Col 1:17-20; 2:9; 3:11; 1 Tim 6:13; Jas 3:16; 1 Joh 2:16; Rev 4:11.

⁵⁶ James Edwards makes the remark on 8:27 that Caesarea Philippi was "famous for its sanctuary to Pan... worshipped in a grotto at the foot of Mt. Hermon" (*The Gospel According to Mark*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans (2002). 246, 262-263). Richard France gives some brief historical background and notes that the city's former name "derived from the local worship of Pan (which succeeded an earlier Canaanite Baal cult)" (*The Gospel of Mark*. Eerdmans Publishing, 2002. 328, 350). Craig Evans gives similar brief information (*World Biblical Commentary Mark 8:27-16:20*. Thomas Nelson, 2000. 13). Eugene Boring notes likewise the town as former centre of Baal worship, and the later shrine to Pan, and Herod's temple. He points out that "Mark thus brings the narrative dealing with the identity of Jesus into a setting replete with the ambiguities of Jewish history and its relation to Rome, with overtones of ancient cultic associations and the contemporary deification and worship of the Roman emperor" (*Mark: A Commentary*. Westminster John Knox Press, 2006. 237). The significance of the Pan-cult is, however, not elaborated. Adela Yarbro Collins provides a more elaborated historical background to Jesus' travel to Caesarea Philippi and points out in addition that Pan played an important role in the Ptolemaic (and Seleucid) ruler cult, and that Josephus connected the grotto and temple with Mount Hermon. She also suggests that "Mark may have had his reasons for locating the confession of Peter, the teaching of discipleship, and the transfiguration in the region of Caesarea Philippi, and these reasons may have been symbolic." (*Mark: A Commentary*. Minneapolis, 2007. 399-400). Unfortunately, neither the cult of Pan, nor any connections between Pan and Jesus is further discussed.

⁵⁷ Freyne, Sean. *Galilee and Gospel: Collected Essays*, Mohr Siebeck, 2000; Freyne, Sean. *Jesus, a Jewish Galilean: A New Reading of the Jesus-Story*. T&T Clark, 2004.

⁵⁸ Freyne, *Jesus*, 40.

[a] journey to the villages of Caesarea Philippi involved entering a region in upper Galilee dominated by belief in the Greek god Pan, whose worship had been associated with a cave at the southern foothills of Mt. Hermon for over two centuries at least.⁵⁹

He also notes Pan's universal features, his association with the countryside, his role as guardian of shepherds and flocks, and his association with Dionysus. Freyne's valuable insights in the ecological, political, and geo-theological significance of (Jesus' journey to) Caesarea Philippi and Hermon that he presents in subsequent pages in his book (and elsewhere), do however, not lead him to explicitly connect Pan to Jesus' actions at this location. Instead, Freyne suggests that there are allusions to Pan and Dionysus in the discourse in Mt 11:17-19 ("We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we wailed, and you did not mourn." v. 17), and the depiction of Jesus as "wine-drinker and glutton" (v. 19; Luk 7:31-35), in which there are echoes, according to Freyne, "of both Pan and Dionysus, and the festive merrymaking of their devotees."⁶⁰ Freyne examines the cult of Dionysus in relation to Jesus as "wine-drinker" in an earlier publication⁶¹ where he reasons that "[p]iping and dancing are universal human activities of merry-making, but there may well be a definite local colouring also with religious significance" and further that "there was a long tradition of both these gods [Pan and Dionysus] in the neighbourhood of Galilee and the pagan resonance of piping and dancing would surely not have been lost on Jesus' Galilean opponents."⁶²

Freyne's observations are an example, and to my knowledge the closest example, of a connection between Jesus and Pan (namely a depiction of Jesus, made by his Galilean opponents, as a devotee of Pan/Dionysus) made by a biblical scholar engaged in the historical context of the gospels. Freyne's study on Dionysus, though not focusing on Pan, still leads to his observations about Pan, and shows that questions about interaction and degree of assimilation between Jewish Galilee and surrounding pagan cults and deities deserve further attention, also beyond the cult of Dionysus. Parts of Freyne's contextualization, though focusing on the historical Jesus, are equally relevant and valuable for this study of Pan in relation to Mark's Jesus.

⁵⁹ Freyne, *Jesus*, 55-56.

⁶⁰ Freyne, *Jesus*, 56.

⁶¹ Freyne, *Galilee and Gospel*, 271-286.

⁶² Freyne, *Galilee and Gospel*, 280-281. On Pan's connection to dance, see also Borgeaud, *Cult of Pan*, 150-151.

The socio-historical context of Paneas/Caesarea Philippi and the cult of Pan are extensively researched in a dissertation by Jennifer Wilkinson on Mark and its gentile audience.⁶³ Wilkinson points out that

The polytheistic environment or cultural ‘web of significance’ in which Mark’s first century audience functioned has received little attention in recent scholarship and represents a lacuna in New Testament historical-critical research.⁶⁴

Wilkinson presents the religious and political significance of this area and concludes that by the late half of the first century, “the cult of Pan and the imperial cult remained the principal worship practised in the city”⁶⁵, and that “the focal point of polytheistic religious activity at Caesarea Philippi was the rocky outcrop of the shrine of Pan.”⁶⁶ Unfortunately, her exegesis only include the episode of the demon-possessed boy and not the transfiguration, and – surprisingly – she does not make any connection between Jesus’ performances and (the cult of) Pan, but rather to various magical healing techniques attributed to other miracle-working men.⁶⁷ Nevertheless, her study shows the relevance and importance of paying closer attention to the “interface with gentile polytheism” in New Testament studies, particularly the gospel of Mark. The publications by the archaeologist and educator in religious studies John Francis Wilson, provides valuable knowledge of the political history of Paneas/Caesarea Philippi.⁶⁸ Wilson occasionally relates the history of the city to the gospel texts on Jesus’ journey to Caesarea Philippi, and provides several valuable observations for the present study. However, Wilson does not engage in any elaborated exegesis on the gospel narrative itself. Still, his research will be a major resource with which this study will engage.

⁶³ Wilkinson, Jennifer. *Mark and his Gentile Audience: A Traditio-Historical and Socio-Cultural Investigation of Mk 4.35-9.29 and its Interface with Gentile Polytheism in the Roman Near East*. (Phd Diss.) Durham University, 2012.

⁶⁴ Wilkinson, *Mark*, 1.

⁶⁵ Wilkinson, *Mark*, 261.

⁶⁶ Wilkinson, *Mark*, 263.

⁶⁷ Wilkinson, *Mark*, 278.

⁶⁸ Wilson, *Caesarea Philippi* and Wilson, John Francis. ‘Paneas/Caesarea Philippi and the World of the Gospels’. *Foundations and Facets Forum*, Third Series 3,1 (2014): 7-26.

1.5 Method and Theory

In the following of this study, I will first address methodological and theoretical points of departure: the reception exegetical approach and how I apply it, theoretical foundations for comparisons of “texts” (in a broad sense), and an agrarian perspective for understanding discourses related to nature and ecology related to other modern hermeneutical approaches to the Bible. In chapter 2, I will sketch important aspects of the historical context of the gospel of Mark in Roman Palestine and the agrarian society more broadly, with a particular focus on how political, religious, economical, and ecological aspects intersected. In the second part of this chapter, I will paint the context of the cult of Pan and sift out points of contact to Mark’s Jesus, of which the geographical conjuncture between the two in Caesarea Philippi is given most attention and serve as a central backdrop for my analysis of Mark 8:27-9:29 (referred to as the *Caesarea-Philippi cycle*). In chapter 4, I analyse the shepherd motif with correlates in Mark 6, in relation to Pan’s import as shepherd deity. Chapter 3 and 4 focuses on similarities between Jesus and Pan,⁶⁹ whereas chapter 5 focuses on the contrasts, investigating the Pan-as-Satan trajectory in Jewish and non-Jewish texts predating Mark, turning then to the texts in Mark most relevant for our study of Pan as the antagonist to Jesus.

1.5.1 General Clarifications

The study of the New Testament texts in this thesis is based on the critical edition of the Greek New Testament,⁷⁰ in dialogue with secondary literature on Mark’s gospel. My use of the labels “Mark’s gospel”, “the Gospel of Mark”, “Mark”, etcetera, do not imply a claim of knowledge about the author of the text I refer to. Unless stated otherwise, English translations of the bible are from NRSV, with occasional minor adjustments. Text-critical questions are discussed only when the manuscripts clearly diverge on matters relevant for my analysis. The historical context is reconstructed through both Jewish traditions from the Hebrew Bible, non-canonical Jewish texts, and Greco-Roman sources. The Greek text of the Septuagint (LXX) is of most relevance for comparisons with Mark, although the Hebrew text is occasionally discussed. Investigations of non-biblical sources are mainly informed by scholarly

⁶⁹ It will be clear throughout the study, however, that my analysis of the texts do not show a strict division between either similarity or contrast, but rather, that both similarities and contrasts can be at play simultaneously.

⁷⁰ Aland, Barbara, et al. *Novum Testamentum Graece*. Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2012.

research and commentaries on these sources. The study uses mainly textual sources but is also informed by material evidence from archaeology and numismatics. Selection of sources is guided in each instance by the specific subject and purpose of the study, and there is no attempt to cover the historical context in general.

1.5.2 Reception Exegesis

This study is sparked by the Christ-Pan juxtaposition in reception history and uses this motif as a lens on the historical material. Reception History (*Rezeptionsgeschichte*) studies the way biblical material has been interpreted in different situations, and the impact and effects of the text throughout history (*Wirkungsgeschichte*)⁷¹. A recent development in reception history studies, termed “reception exegesis” works in opposite direction: from the reception history back to the texts themselves. The label “reception exegesis” was first coined by Paul Joyce and Diana Lipton, in 2013.⁷² Reception exegesis uses reception history in retrojection to elucidate aspects of the text that can be present but often hidden in most readings of the biblical text. Paul Joyce states that reception exegesis

is driven by the insight that how the Bible has been received may provide invaluable assistance to the exegetical task. [...] Use of the Bible in later times can [...] shine a spotlight on biblical verses that have been dulled by familiarity; it can foreground biblical concepts and concerns that have been faded over time into the background.⁷³

Joyce’s methodology builds on precursory ideas in the field of reception history, and refers to the works of John Sawyer, David Tollerton, and Larry Kreitzer.⁷⁴ Sawyer states that reception history not only analyses the context of the adaptation of a biblical text, but that this analysis “often

⁷¹ On the foundational categories for reception history, *Rezeptionsgeschichte* and *Wirkungsgeschichte*, see Gadamer, Hans George. *Truth & Method*. Sheed and Ward, 1979.

⁷² See Paul Joyce and Diana Lipton, (eds.), *Lamentations Through the Centuries*. Wiley-Blackwell, 2013. 17-19.

⁷³ Paul Joyce, ‘Foreword’, in Joan E. Taylor, (ed.), *Jesus and Brian: Exploring the Historical Jesus and his Times Via Monty Python’s Life of Brian*. Bloomsbury, 2015. xvii-xix. See also Joyce and Lipton, *Lamentations*, 17-19.

⁷⁴ Sawyer, John FA. *A Concise Dictionary of the Bible and its Reception*. Westminster John Knox Press, 2009. ix; David C. Tollerton, ‘Two Jewish-American Interpretations of the Book of Job in the Aftermath of the Holocaust: A Short Discussion of the Relation between Job’s Modern Reception and Its Ancient Production’, in Lidia D. Matassa and Jason M. Silverman, (eds.), *Text, Theology, and Trowel: New Investigations in the Biblical World*. Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2011. 59-74; Larry Joseph Kreitzer. ‘The New Testament in Fiction and Film: On Reversing the Hermeneutical Flow’. *The Biblical Seminar*. JSOT Press, 1993; Kreitzer, Larry Joseph. *Pauline Images in Fiction and Film: On Reversing the Hermeneutical Flow*. A&C Black, 1999; Kreitzer, Larry Joseph. *Gospel Images in Fiction and Film: On Reversing the Hermeneutical Flow*. Bloomsbury Publishing, 2002.

gives us new insights into the language and imagery of the Bible.”⁷⁵ Kreitzer works from a similar idea, to “reverse the hermeneutical flow”⁷⁶, which aims to put adaptations of the Bible in film and fiction in dialogue with the text in its original context. The hermeneutical flow is “creatively reversed” and enables the reader to “discover new depths and fresh insights about the New Testament materials via classic works of literature and their film adaptations which use those materials.”⁷⁷ Put differently, the reversing of the hermeneutical flow, according to Kreitzer, allows us to re-examine “NT passages or themes in the light of some of the enduring expressions of our own culture, namely great literary works and their film adaptation”.⁷⁸ An apparent methodological weakness with this kind of undertaking is the risk of anachronistic readings, at least if the aim is to search for authorial intentions or to construct the historical context with a historical-critical methodology. A reader-oriented approach with a synchronic view on intertextuality would of course allow more creative intertextual readings and be less concerned with the problem of anachronism. Kreitzer does however, assert that “a well-grounded understanding of the author’s intent in producing a piece of literature, however difficult that is to determine, can contribute significantly to our appreciation of his or her writing”.⁷⁹ Joyce and Lipton’s coining of “reception exegesis” indicates that it is an *exegetical* task, focusing on the text in its original context, and the exegetical fruit that can be harvested by allowing interpretations and adaptations from reception history to challenge traditional scholarly interpretations, and broaden the perspectives and categories of historical-critical approaches.

In pre-modern biblical interpretation, adoptions and interpretations of the Bible were often guided by former interpretations, and interpretations from e.g., church fathers were usually viewed as authoritative. With the rise of critical exegeses in the 19th century, driven by a historical-critical methodology and the quest for what “actually occurred”, the history of reception was regarded as distortive – especially dogmatic interpretations by the church.⁸⁰ Today, it is often acknowledged that a scholarly historical-

⁷⁵ Sawyer, *CDBR*, ix. Quoted in Joyce, “Foreword”, xix, and Joyce and Lipton, *Lamentations*, 17.

⁷⁶ This expression is included in the subtitles of his publications. (See note 71 above).

⁷⁷ Kreitzer, *Pauline Images*, 28. An example of Kreitzer’s “creative reversal of the hermeneutical flow” is his analysis of the motif of shipwreck and its theological underpinnings of sin and salvation in Daniel Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe* that finds striking similarities with the account of Paul’s shipwreck in Acts 27, according to Kreitzer (*Pauline Images*, 18-19; 31-77).

⁷⁸ Kreitzer, *New Testament*, 19.

⁷⁹ Kreitzer, *Pauline Images*, 28.

⁸⁰ The origin of historical-criticism is more complex and has its roots not only in the Enlightenment’s rejection of dogmas, but can be traced to the *sola scriptura* ideal of the Reformation, and ideas from the Renaissance.

critical interpretation of the biblical text is also a culturally and historically situated phenomenon that reconstructs the original context through a lens that is shaped by the world in front of the text.⁸¹ In other words, all efforts to get behind the text are affected by implied notions that are shaped by the contemporary culture of the interpreter, for instance, concerning which parts of the historical context are relevant for understanding the text. The critique of a too heavy reliance on historical-critical methods and their (assumed) objectivity has made room for reception history as a productive alternative.

Thus, the usefulness of reception history in exegetical undertakings rests on the assumption that reconstructions of historical contexts never completely get away from being projections of the interpreter's own context. By engaging in the receptions of a biblical text, the exegete can gain awareness of the otherwise unconscious influence of various interpretations on his or her critical examinations of the text in its original contexts. Moreover, as in the case of this study, reception history can be beneficial as a heuristic tool, by consciously employing earlier interpretations to shed new light on the texts, and potentially to solve interpretative enigmas. An awareness of the plurality of interpretations in the history of reception and their location in specific times and cultures, moreover, exposes the situatedness and particularity of modern historical-critical methods and interpretations. As I will argue, the modern framing of environmental and nature discourses is shaped by modern perspectives and ways of thinking about "nature" and the human-nature relation. These discourses shape the questions brought to the biblical texts in contemporary attempts to read the Bible "ecologically". Thus, reception history not only has the potential to help shed new (non-modern) light on the texts, but also challenges modern framings of environmental issues.

1.5.2.1 Selection

If the goal is to search for a possible or plausible original intention of a biblical text, does it matter where an adaptation/interpretation of a biblical text or motif that is used for reception exegetics comes from? I note that previous reception exegetical studies do not often engage in elaborating clear criteria for choosing material from reception history, though they usually feature at least some kind of reflection or motivation for their

For a brief overview, see Law, David R. *The Historical-Critical Method: A Guide for the Perplexed*. Bloomsbury Publishing, 2012. Ch. 2.

⁸¹ See e.g., Breed, Brennan W. *Nomadic Text: A Theory of Biblical Reception History*. Indiana University Press, 2014. 6.

choice. Lena Sofia Tiemeyer, in her reception exegetical work on 1-2 Samuel and the story of Jonathan in the light of modern novels, declares that her selection of the material is “largely personal”, and driven by the aim to “illustrate a fruitful dialogue that can take place between literature and the Bible and how this dialogue can enrich our appreciation of both”. She does, however, present four principles for selecting the “fictional retellings” of the Biblical text.⁸² Besides practical considerations, she opts for using “well-written books that have lasting value” and eschews works that “whitewash the biblical characters or use their flaws to preach a moral message”.⁸³ Moreover, Tiemeyer reasons that “A creative writer may in some cases be more attuned to the different literary nuances that a text can have than biblical scholars, and biblical scholars do well to listen to their expertise”.⁸⁴ Kreitzer for his part has chosen “classic works of literature” to let them “interact with the biblical materials which were very much a part of their conceptual world and which helped give shape to their literary efforts.”⁸⁵ In the project *Jesus and Brian*, the motivation for using Monty Pyton’s *Life of Brian* seems to be the stark reactions – negative and positive – the film created after its release, and its “numerous references to what was then the cutting edge biblical scholarship”, thus making it “very appropriate for scholars to engage with”.⁸⁶

As these examples show, the motivation for choosing a particular interpretation or adaptation of a biblical text or motif reflects the idea of reception exegesis: to shed *new* light on the biblical texts. In other words, biblical adaptations that can spark ideas and perspectives that have not already been tested. Therefore, it is natural to use adoptions and interpretations somewhat outside the majority interpretations of biblical scholars and the church.⁸⁷ This does not mean that the selection is (or should be) driven by the principle of “the odder the better”. As we saw above, lasting value, literary quality, and work from authors infused by the biblical texts, seems to be preferred – for good reasons, I think.

⁸² Tiemeyer, Lena-Sofia. *In Search of Jonathan: Jonathan Between the Bible and Modern Fiction*. Oxford University Press, 2023. 15-16.

⁸³ Tiemeyer, *Jonathan*, 15-16.

⁸⁴ Tiemeyer, *Jonathan*, 12.

⁸⁵ Kreitzer, *Pauline Images*, 29.

⁸⁶ Joan Taylor, “Introduction”, in Taylor, ed., *Jesus and Brian*, xxi.

⁸⁷ Listening to voices from the margins, and “outsiders” is a flourishing trend in biblical studies, and reception exegesis might be seen as a part of this trend. Especially in post-colonial hermeneutics, voices from various groups from the “margins” is engaged in dialogue with biblical texts to challenge traditional interpretations of the majority. These voices can represent e.g., African, Latin American, Sami, womanist, feminist, indigenous, and Earth perspectives. For an overview, see Sugirtharajah, Rasiah S., (ed.), *Voices From the Margin: Interpreting the Bible in the Third World*. Orbis Books, 2016.

For the present study, the use of the juxtaposition of Christ and Pan in reception history to shed light on the biblical texts is motivated by the following consideration: 1, It is a *recurring* motif, used by different authors, in different periods of time. 2, It is used in *various* medias and picked up by *different* groups of peoples (novelists, poets, artists, encyclopaedists, and occasionally, theologians). 3, It is employed by authors who allowed the biblical texts to resonate with other texts and who were often well acquainted with both the biblical texts and the ancient texts of the cultural matrix of New Testament time. (Writers like Rabelais and Milton would well qualify as “creative writers” that might “be more attuned to the different literary nuances that a text can have than biblical scholars”, to cite Tiemeyer’s criteria.) 4, It occurs already in early times, close to the cultural and linguistic context of the New Testament.

These points are not by themselves decisive for the results of the exegetical examination of the biblical text – this rests on the substantiality and persuasiveness of the exegetical analysis. I do however suggest that the origin and nature of the material from reception history has relevance for the plausibility of what exegetical fruit a particular interpretation or adaptation might yield. The points above strengthen the legitimacy of the present study.

Despite the focus of reception exegesis on the text itself in its historical situatedness, such studies are usually sparked by questions and concerns from the contemporary context. The contemporary issues of environmental degradation and human-nature relations in society in general, and in academic theological and biblical scholarship in particular, make the present study of Pan as a symbol of nature in relation to New Testament depictions of Christ relevant for questions of our contemporary world. The suitability of using this motif from reception history is that it can provide a bridge between the texts in their historical context and our contemporary ecological concerns. Ecological readings of the Bible run the risk of anachronistically applying ecological and environmental issues framed by modern notions and values. When modern categories are applied to non-modern texts and their contexts, they easily eclipse more than they reveal. This awareness is of special importance in the present study with its focus on ecological discourses, since, if modern conceptions about “nature” and “the environment” control the questions we bring to the biblical texts, and the texts are studied by means of modern categories and worldviews, then our blind spot might be exactly where sight is most needed.

1.5.2.2 Reception Exegesis Applied

Since the reception of the Christ-Pan trope does not rest on one particular biblical text but shows a fluid and varied use of biblical elements mixed with elements from other texts, it is not obvious which biblical text should be studied primarily. Thus, I do not attempt to scrutinize every specific employment of the Christ-Pan trope in the history of reception and try to pinpoint what specific biblical text (if any) might be the source of inspiration. The dynamics of the reception in question is not a two-part conversation between the original text and its interpreter, but rather a creative engagement with elements derived from biblical texts, their subsequent interpretations, and the cultural milieu of the author. In this process, certain biblical texts are consciously or subconsciously employed as motifs, allusions, or references, but this process is in most cases out of our reach. Eusebius' appropriation of Pan as the demon defeated by Christ is certainly one influence on the trajectory of the Christ-Pan juxtaposition, that was creatively moulded and altered in various ways from the time of the Renaissance. Later adoptions likely also drew from various other texts such as Roman poets, Stoic treatises, and certainly the New Testament, especially by those acquainted with classical texts and culture. The recurring identifications of Christ and Pan as universal god of All, as Lord of creation and nature, their similar functions as good shepherds, their connection to the wilderness, the similarity of their dying, and the contrasting use of Pan as the antagonist to Christ in the form of Satan or demon, go beyond Eusebius' use of the Pan figure in relation to Christ.

In carrying out this study as a work of reception exegesis, I depart from the overview of the Christ-Pan juxtaposition in reception history presented above, to point out conceptual, geographical, and chronological conjunctures between Christ and Pan by presenting the historical contexts of the cult of Pan, the New Testament environment in general and the gospel of Mark in particular (chapter 2). This contextualization will of course not be exhaustive but must focus on aspects relevant for this study. Points of comparison between Christ and Pan will then be applied to Mark's gospel in chapter 3, 4, and 5. The closest point of contact is Jesus' visit to the city of Pan, narrated in the synoptic gospels. Since Mark is the earliest witness to this story (according to most scholars), it is natural to use the text of Mark for an initial study. Moreover, Mark's attention to geographic and spatial dimensions in the narrative, its rural setting, the

cosmic aspects of Jesus' actions and ministry, and the pagan-oriented communication⁸⁸ further motivate this choice.

1.5.3 Intertextuality and Cultural Encyclopedia

If you wish to get a thorough and complete understanding of the books of the New Testament, put yourself in the place of those to whom they were first delivered by the apostles as a legacy. Transfer yourself in thought to that time and that area where they first were read. Endeavour, so far as possible, to acquaint yourself with the customs, practices, habits, opinions, accepted ways of thoughts, proverbs, symbolic language, and everyday expressions of these men (!), and with the ways and means by which they attempt to persuade others or to furnish a foundation for faith.

Johann Jakob Wettstein *De Interpretatione Novi Testamenti*, published 1752.⁸⁹

The present study mainly focusses on patterns of motifs, myths, imagery, and geography, and how they overlap conceptually and culturally. It does not engage in analysing intertextual relations in a strict sense of comparing textual wordings and their possible interdependence, except for some cases of Mark's use of the Jewish scriptures, where clear allusions and even quotations are made. To this end, the study is informed by recent developments of intertextual theories, and the metaphor of cultural "encyclopaedia".⁹⁰ A text is, as Sylvia Keesmaat points out, not necessarily a specific written document, but includes matrices of ideas, rituals, and works of art. Thus, a main task for interpreters working with intertextuality is to "construct the historical, ideological, and social system, with which every text in that culture is in dialogue", as Keesmaat, following Boyarin, puts it.⁹¹ The historical context described as an "encyclopaedia", encompasses virtually all cultural knowledge, including "codes, rules, conventions, history, literature, truth claims, discourses, all the units that culture comprises: everything".⁹² Engagement in the cultural

⁸⁸ These aspects will be further elaborated in chapter 3.

⁸⁹ Wettstein, Johan Jacob, *Novum Testamentum Graecum*, vol. 2, Amsterdam 1752. Quoted in translation in Klauck, Hans-Josef, *Religious Context of Early Christianity: A Guide to Graeco-Roman Religions*. A&C Black, 2003. 2.

⁹⁰ Developed from the theories of Umberto Eco (*Semiotics and the Philosophy of Language*. Indiana University Press, 1986).

⁹¹ Keesmaat, Sylvia. 'Exodus and the Intertextual Transformation of Tradition in Romans 8.14-30'. *JSNT* 54 (1994): 29-56. 33.

⁹² Wagner, Ross, 'Paul and Scripture' in Westerholm, Stephen, (ed.), *The Blackwell Companion to Paul*, 154-171. Wiley-Blackwell, 2011. 161 (quoting Leroy Huizinga).

encyclopaedia (and not only with the text itself) is necessary for the construction of a plausible historical context of the biblical text. “As a communicative act”, says Ross Wagner, “a text actualizes a limited set of the infinite possibilities afforded by the encyclopaedia.”⁹³

As noted, we find in the New Testament no explicit reference to the pagan god Πάν – a circumstance that confronts this study with an apparent challenge. However, intertextual relations can, of course, also be implicit, i.e., by allusions, though they are naturally more difficult to prove. An allusion works on the basis of the presumption of the authors, that their addressees share (parts of) their cultural encyclopaedia, so that the authors can evoke another “text” (an idea, a concept, a poem, a practice, a geographic location et cetera) without explicitly referring to it. To detect an allusion is not only to clarify lines of influence, but to understand what rhetorical and semantical effects an allusion has in a text. The interpreter is, as Richard Hays states, “trying to understand the way in which an author creates meaning-effects in a text through artful reminiscences of another text well-known to the community”.⁹⁴

To discern whether we have an allusion in the text, we need good knowledge of other texts (with possible connections to the interpreted text), and a good knowledge of the cultural encyclopaedia. In Mark (and the New Testament in general), allusions and citations from Jewish texts, especially the LXX, are primarily used as a source to build an argument in the rhetoric of the New Testament author. To show how the words and deeds of Jesus fit in the matrix of Jewish thought and tradition is indeed a major concern for the New Testament authors, as is evident from the ubiquitous citations and allusions to Jewish scripture in the NT.

It is crucial to acknowledge, particularly for the present study, that the New Testament resonates not only with the Jewish Scripture but with the “entire cultural encyclopaedia of early Judaism in all its diversity, within which Old Testament Scripture was interpreted”, as Leroy Huizinga points out.⁹⁵ Thus, the cultural encyclopaedia of the world of the New Testament as we reconstruct it, should include different Jewish texts, such as the Dead Sea scrolls, Pseudepigrapha, Philo, and Josephus, but also other texts (both written and non-written “texts”) that we can assume were part of the cultural conversation and reflected notions, ideologies, theology, practices,

⁹³ Wagner, *Paul and Scripture*, 161.

⁹⁴ Hays, Richard B. *The Conversion of the Imagination: Paul as Interpreter of Israel’s Scripture*. Eerdmans Publishing, 2005. 30-31.

⁹⁵ Huizinga, Leroy. *The New Isaac: Tradition and Intertextuality in the Gospel of Matthew*. Brill, 2009. 61.

and historical and cultural circumstances. In the New Testament, we find allusions or parallels to non-Jewish “texts”, for example to the Asclepios cult, to the Caesar, and to texts of Homer, Virgil, and others.⁹⁶ What is the intended meaning-effect of these allusions? Though New Testament authors sometimes can use pagan texts to support an ethical principle or a commonly held notion (as in Acts 17:28), I suggest that other types of allusions function as *oppositio in imitando*.⁹⁷ In other words, they evoke, in a model pagan/pagan Christian audience, a well-known text, for instance the notion that Asclepios can heal sickness, and by implication invoke the cult and practices connected to Asclepios. This is how the rhetorical and theological meaning comes to light. *Oppositio in imitando* implies both similarity and difference, so by discerning what is a shared presumption (in this example, it is the idea that somebody has the authority to heal sickness) and what is corrected in relation to that assumption (it is Jesus, more than Asclepios who has the authority). My aim in this study is to put the cult of Pan in the forefront and show that this popular deity, and the varied symbolic functions he had, was part of the cultural encyclopaedia in the first century, and relevant for understanding the New Testament, particularly Mark’s gospel.

1.5.4 Ecological and Agrarian Perspectives

In the slipstream of the global challenges of environmental and climate issues, a new field of biblical research – mainly referred to as Ecological Hermeneutics – has developed during the last decades. In this field, questions of methodology have been one of the key issues. The different methods and approaches have been described (and critically assessed and developed) in several publications in Ecological Hermeneutics.⁹⁸ One of

⁹⁶ Studies that suggest an intertextual connection between Homer’s work and the gospel of Mark (and other New Testament texts) has been done by e.g., MacDonald, Dennis R. *The Gospels and Homer: Imitations of Greek Epic in Mark and Luke-Acts*. Rowman & Littlefield, 2014.

⁹⁷ This term is associated among literary scholars to an authors’ allusion to and mimicry of another text (i.e., Virgil’s allusions to Theocritus), that provides “unmistakable indications of his source”, but with a “dictional oddity”, or “correction” that reveals the polemical attitudes that lie close beneath the surface” (Thomas, Richard F. ‘Virgil’s Georgics and the Art of Reference’. *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 90 (1986): 171-198. 171,185). In my study, *oppositio in imitando* refers to the same idea but the concept is applied in a broader sense to various “texts” as discussed above.

⁹⁸ See e.g., Conradie, Ernst M. *Christianity and Ecological Theology: Resources for Further Research*. African Sun Media, 2006. 69-83; Marlow, Hillary. *Biblical Prophets and Contemporary Environmental Ethics: Re-Reading Amos, Hosea, and First Isaiah*. Oxford University Press, 2009. Ch. 3; Horrell, David G., Cheryl Hunt, and Christopher Southgate. *Greening Paul: Reading the Apostle in a Time of Ecological Crisis*. Baylor University Press, 2010. Part I; Nilsen, Tina Dykesteen, and Anna Rebecca Solevåg. ‘Expanding Ecological Hermeneutics: The Case for Ecolonialism’. *Journal of Biblical Literature* 135.4 (2016): 665-683; Leese, JJ Johnson. *Christ, Creation and the Cosmic Goal of Redemption: A Study of Pauline Creation Theology as Read by Irenaeus and Applied to Ecotheology*. Bloomsbury Publishing, 2018.12-14.

the crucial hermeneutical difficulties and divides among the main approaches to “green” readings of the Bible, is the vast gap between our contemporary problems *vis-a-vis* the world of the text, i.e., the ancient historical context. The assumption is that since our contemporary problems were not present, or even imaginable in biblical times, it is our contemporary ecological concerns and questions that are being brought to the Bible. To retrieve ecological wisdom from the Bible, it is, accordingly, necessary to evaluate the biblical text from modern standards and knowledge of ecological and environmental problems. The Earth Bible project pushes this as far as to stipulate eight criteria for evaluating whether a text is “green” (Earth-friendly) or “grey” (Earth-unfriendly).⁹⁹

The Exeter project (2006-2009) took a somewhat different approach that seeks to find hermeneutical keys that can bridge the gap between the world of the text and contemporary environmental issues. Ethical principles found in notably Paul’s moral teaching are expanded and extrapolated to include ethical sensitivity towards the environment, and not only to humans. While the hermeneutical approach of the Exeter project is highly sensitive to the historical context of the Bible (the Pauline letters), it emphasises that any ethical imperative must be informed by, and be in dialogue with, modern science.¹⁰⁰

While this study in a broad sense relates to the field of Ecological Hermeneutics, it is not directly guided by modern environmental issues or ethical imperatives and is not engaged in a counter-reading to evaluate if the biblical text is “grey” or “green”. Moreover, the present study does not engage with the hermeneutical questions as to how to formulate ethical guidance for our present time. My aim is to understand the text on its own pre-modern terms, and I do suggest that the historically oriented perspective presented below not only provides a framework for understanding the texts, but also a non-modern perspective that potentially can challenge our modern framing of environmental issues and the fundamental narratives, ideologies and worldviews *implied* in modern environmental science and discourse.¹⁰¹

An ecological perspective on the text is in some sense intentionally reductionistic from the outset, and it would indeed be so if “ecological” is restricted to research on references to plants, trees, animals, or “nature”,

⁹⁹ See Habel, Norman. *An Inconvenient Text: Is a Green Reading of the Bible Possible?* ATF Press, 2009.

¹⁰⁰ Horrell, Hunt, and Southgate, *Greening Paul*, 44.

¹⁰¹ See Wiljebrand, David. *Framing the Ecological Crisis Now and Then: A Call for a Historical Approach for a Green Reading of Paul*, Paper presented at ISBL, Helsinki, 2018.

together with attempts to deduce an environmentally sensitive ethics from Jesus' interaction with "nature". Jesus' attention to seeds, the cycle of growing, different types of soil, the "birds in the sky", and his fondness for hiking in the mountains, could with a hermeneutical leap perhaps inspire an environmentally friendly sentiment. On the other hand, the driving of the swineherd (though not actively) into the sea to drown (Mark 5:11-13), or the deliberate cursing of the fig tree (Mark 11:12-14, 20-21), would appear as less environmentally friendly. As I will propose below, one of the impediments to gleaning ecological wisdom from the Bible is that the modern framing of the issue often too uncritically determines what to look for in the biblical texts. Moreover, the assumption that the ecological problems today are new, and could not be perceived in Antiquity, further obscures potential "ecological" dimensions of the texts.

Admittedly, ecological issues do not seem to be a prevailing theme in the New Testament. One way to approach and tease out ecological dimensions is to draw attention to themes and language of creation in the texts. Several contributions have been made in biblical scholarship during the last decades which put creation theology more in the front, and see it as related to redemption, notably by C. Westermann, B.W. Anderson, H.H. Schmid, J.D. Levenson, and T. Fretheim.¹⁰² The awakened concerns of ecological and environmental issues have played a part in this development among these Hebrew Bible scholars, especially since the standard account in western thinking traces a modern anthropocentric (and destructive) ideology to a Judeo-Christian understanding of creation based on the Genesis creation story and the alleged "carte blanche" to take dominion over nature.¹⁰³ Fretheim, among others, has argued that a strong focus on salvation/covenant history as the biblical meta-narrative, has to a large extent eclipsed God's role as Creator. Election and redemption of humans have been in the forefront, contributing to an anthropocentric bias and a neglect of the earthly and material dimensions of spirituality in the reading of the texts.¹⁰⁴ Moreover, a narrow view of creation as origination and as *ex nihilo* places the theme of creation in the New Testament in the

¹⁰² Westermann, Claus. *Creation*. Trans. J. Scullion. SPCK, 1974; Anderson, Bernard. *Creation versus Chaos*. Fortress Press, 1987; Schmid, Hans Henrich. 'Creation, Righteousness, Salvation: 'Creation Theology' and the Broad Horizon of Biblical Theology'. In Bernard W. Anderson, (ed.), *Creation in the Old Testament*, 102-117. SPCK, 1980; Fretheim, Terence. *God and the World in the Old Testament: A Relational Theology of Creation*. Abingdon Press, 2005; Levenson, Jon. *Creation and the Persistence of Evil*. Princeton University Press, 1988. On the scholarly shift of focus from salvation history to creation, see also Marlow, *Prophets*, 70-80.

¹⁰³ As famously proposed by White, Lynn. 'The Historical Roots of our Ecologic Crisis'. *Science* 155.3767 (1967): 1203-1207.

¹⁰⁴ Fretheim, *God and the World*, ix-x. See also Freyne, *Jesus*, 25; Conradie, *Resources*, 103-104.

periphery. If creation is reduced to “the beginning” of (salvation-) history, the Christ-event that the New Testament centres around is not connected to creation theology.¹⁰⁵ Acknowledging the central role of creation motifs and discourses in the Hebrew Bible is a key for ecological interpretations, also for the New Testament. I think Richard Bauckham is correct when he states that “the Bible’s theology of creation is to a large extent developed in the Old Testament and then presupposed in the New [...] what is already well established in the Old Testament is not repeated in the New.”¹⁰⁶

In New Testament studies, a renewed interest in creation theology, together with concerns for contemporary environmental issues, have sparked interpretations focused on creation in the New Testament. I consider John Gibbs’ *Creation and Redemption: A Study in Pauline Theology*¹⁰⁷ as ground-breaking in uniting ktisiological and soteriological themes in Pauline thought. Subsequent interpretations that synthesise creation and redemption with a more emphasised eco-theological agenda have followed, though mainly from a systematic-theological angle, as in the works of Jürgen Molmann and Colin Gunton.¹⁰⁸ A recent monograph by J.J. Johnson Leese builds on Gibbs’ work and uses Irenaeus’ interpretations of Pauline creation and redemption theology as a hermeneutical resource to understand these motifs in Paul’s letters, and constructively applies this to contemporary eco-theology.¹⁰⁹ Sean McDonough has taken a broader scope in his study *Christ as Creator*, based on renewed insights and emphasis on creation from Hebrew Bible scholars. He asserts that redemption and creation are “explicitly and inextricably linked in the biblical tradition”, and that

The pattern of salvation as a kind of new creation occurs at every turn in the Old Testament; indeed, it is so common it did not necessarily make its way to overt expression by the New Testament writers.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁵ Other factors can be brought up as to why creation theology has been diminished in modern theology and spirituality. Terence Fretheim lists eleven trajectories in the twentieth century that has subordinated and marginalized creation theology in biblical studies (and in church). See Fretheim, *God and the World*, ix-x.

¹⁰⁶ Bauckham, Richard. *Bible and Ecology: Rediscovering the Community of Creation*. Darton, Longman, Todd, 2010. 141.

¹⁰⁷ Gibbs, John G. *Creation and Redemption: A Study in Pauline Theology*. Brill Archive, 1971.

¹⁰⁸ See especially Moltmann, Jürgen. *Sun of Righteousness, Arise!: God’s Future for Humanity and the Earth*. Fortress Press, 2010; Gunton, Colin E. *Christ and Creation: The Didsbury Lectures, 1990*. Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2005.

¹⁰⁹ Leese, *Cosmic Goal*.

¹¹⁰ McDonough, Sean M. *Christ as Creator: Origins of a New Testament Doctrine*. Oxford University Press on Demand, 2009. 49.

For the authors of the New Testament, thus, Jesus' function as redeemer is closely linked to his function as creator, although implicit rather than explicit. McDonough again:

[T]he doctrine [of Christ as creator] has an importance that far outweighs its relatively scant appearances in the New Testament. The teaching appears across a wide range of New Testament texts, and the very fact that it emerges without explanation indicates that it was almost taken for granted as an integral part of the gospel proclamation.¹¹¹

Importantly, McDonough points out that the articulation of Jesus' agency in creation in the Hellenistic world, would inevitably bring the idea into contact with Greek religious and philosophical conceptions.¹¹²

The strands in New Testament research highlighting the centrality of creation in Jewish Scripture, its continuity into the New Testament, and its negotiation with the broader Greco-Roman culture, contribute to set the stage for the present study.

1.5.4.1 Agrarianism as Interpretative Lens

This study tries to point out and exemplify, through the framing of the cult of Pan in relation to the biblical texts, how political, social, moral, theological, and ecological aspects of the historical context are interconnected.¹¹³ To construe an adequate context and worldview in which nature-discourses and aspects of geography and landscape can be brought in relation to both Jesus of the gospel of Mark and the cult of Pan, my approach in this study follows a recent development towards historically and anthropologically oriented hermeneutics that seeks to expose the “colonial-industrial dissociation between humanity and the environment” that lies behind anthropocentric readings of the bible, but “also characterizes ecological hermeneutics”.¹¹⁴ An agrarian perspective on the biblical texts and contexts tries to reconstruct a premodern anthropology and worldview, in which “ecological” awareness is intertwined and intersected in social, religious, political, and theological “spheres”. Moreover, it strongly acknowledges humans as bodily creatures

¹¹¹ McDonough, *Christ as Creator*, 1.

¹¹² McDonough, *Christ as Creator*, 4.

¹¹³ For the convenience of communication, this study occasionally uses modern categories like “religion”, “politics”, “ecology”, “nature”, et cetera.

¹¹⁴ Stulac, Daniel J. *History and Hope: The Agrarian Wisdom of Isaiah 28-35*. (Phd Diss.) Duke University, 2017. 40.

embedded in their local place who perceive and express their reality in a particular and local embeddedness.

The theologian Norman Wirzba highlights the “momentous shift” from hunter-gatherer to agricultural society with its “radically new economics and political ways of living in place, relating to plants and animals, and thinking about society, culture and ultimate reality.” Our modern society, notably, has undergone a similarly momentous shift from agricultural to a global- and urban centred society with radical “new ways of living in a region and configuring our relationship to each other, fellow creatures, and ultimate reality”. As Wirzba points out, it is thus crucial for a modern interpreter of the biblical text to understand that “the biblical writers and readers/hearers lived in a predominant agricultural world”, and that “agricultural sensibilities and sympathies saturated their theological reflection and their worldview because animals, food crops, soil, water and work were ever present concerns.”¹¹⁵ Wirzba and others have argued that contemporary agrarian thinking represents a perspective that provides the exegete with a way to recognize the agricultural sensibilities of the biblical world, and thus bridge the gap between our modern society and theirs.

An agrarian perspective is helpful to understand the worldview of the biblical writers (and audience), and to provide a critical perspective on the modern (post-)industrial society. Agrarian hermeneutics rests on the assumption that contemporary agrarian thinking generally corresponds to the worldview of the biblical authors, and provides a non-modern mind-set that makes us better readers of the pre-modern biblical texts.¹¹⁶ This approach is elaborated notably by Ellen F. Davis, in her work *Scripture, Culture and Agriculture*, in which Davis defines agrarianism as “a way of thinking and ordering life in community that is based on the health of the land and of living creatures.”¹¹⁷ An agrarian perspective on the Hebrew Bible works with the premise that the covenantal relationship between God and the people of Israel fundamentally involved a relation to the land. An agrarian reading of the Bible, says Davis, is a perspective, rather than a method, that enquires the texts about “the relation between humans (or Israelites in particular) and the material sources of life as an essential aspect of living in the presence of God”¹¹⁸ At the centre of an agrarian perspective is eating and the production of food, a cultural practice and

¹¹⁵ Wirzba, Norman. ‘Agrarian Ecotheology.’ *Theology* 116.1 (2013): 36-38. 36.

¹¹⁶ Davis, Ellen F. *Scripture, Culture, and Agriculture: An Agrarian Reading of the Bible*. Cambridge University Press, 2008. 22.

¹¹⁷ Davis, *Scripture*, 1.

¹¹⁸ Davis, *Scripture*, 3.

biological necessity so basic and mundane and in our contemporary society so trivial and de-sacralised that its importance and centrality in the biblical cultures and the biblical texts has often been overlooked by modern interpreters. Davis emphasizes that the practice of producing and eating food, “ramify into virtually every aspect of public and private life”, and “has an ineluctably ethical dimension [...] that bears directly on the health of the earth and living creatures, on the emotional, economic, and physical well-being of families and communities, and ultimately on their survival.”¹¹⁹

Agrarian hermeneutic has been further elaborated by Daniel Stulac, who defends and refines Davis’ theory in his dissertation *History and Hope: The Agrarian Wisdom of Isaiah 28-35*. Stulac suggests three core principles of agrarian thinking: the importance of the creaturely body, the primacy of local places, and the necessity of proper action relative to those local places. The common thread between these principles, says Stulac,

is an anthropology that begins not with the autonomy of the subjective mind, but with the dependency of the body upon organic systems. Thus, agrarianism consciously marks out an alternative to Cartesian dualism, modernity’s epistemic foundation. Agrarian knowledge is defined as an integration of theory and praxis, and so presupposes a materially and historically meaningful universe shot through with moral value.¹²⁰

This means that peoples with an agrarian mind-set sees themselves as “integrated within rather than distinct from the so-called ‘environment’”,¹²¹ and “as an organic being wrapped into a dense network of ecological, social, and moral relationships”.¹²² Moreover, the primacy of local places implies according to Stulac, that “place is not merely a physical location [...] it is a dense network of bodies, cultures, memories and land moving through time together”,¹²³ and that “[p]lace-based knowledge involves an integration of ecological, social, ethical, and historical considerations”.¹²⁴ Finally, proper action entails for agrarians a faithful communal responsibility to the human relations in the household, family and marriage, and the economic and ecological health of the local

¹¹⁹ Davis, *Scripture*, 22.

¹²⁰ Stulac, *History*, 11.

¹²¹ Stulac, *History*, 14.

¹²² Stulac, *History*, 19.

¹²³ Stulac, *History*, 22.

¹²⁴ Stulac, *History*, 25.

place. Thus, propriety is in the agrarian mind about affection and love, relational fidelity, good work and craftsmanship.¹²⁵

Both Davis and Stulac apply this agrarian framework to the Hebrew Bible – set in an agricultural context and composed with a locally flavoured language in a particular landscape – and show how this is reflected in the texts, and thus provide a lens to better understand the biblical discourse. It allows a more continuous integration of themes that are often treated as separate categories in an atomized modern reading. Recent exegetical studies of a broad range of Hebrew Bible texts by Davis, Stulac, and others working with an agrarian hermeneutic and similar perspectives have demonstrated a conceptual coherence between themes such as land managements, dietary laws, covenant loyalty, idolatry, wisdom, adultery, consumption, economy, and politics.¹²⁶

This perspective is obviously still coming from our own modern world, but I maintain that this kind of hermeneutical orientation is more appropriate to ancient society and challenges the artificial separation of “environment” from other categories or aspects of human-world interactions. An agrarian perspective is thus a more relevant and useful hermeneutic lens to understand not only the Hebrew Bible, but also the culture in Roman Palestine and the gospel of Mark in particular. Davis states in her introduction that “[a]n agrarian reading of the New Testament is possible and necessary”, and that

Any such reading of the New Testament will need to begin with an awareness of the agrarian perspective that dominates Israel’s Scriptures, which are as indispensable for modern Christians as they were for the New Testament writers.¹²⁷

¹²⁵ Stulac, *History*, 25-32.

¹²⁶ Davis’ *Scripture, Culture and Agriculture* is mainly a thematic study but centres around the creation stories in Genesis, the wilderness feeding in Exodus 16, the codes of holiness in Leviticus 17-26, Naboth’s vineyard in 1 Kings, the poetry of the “agrarian prophets” of Amos and Hosea, and Wisdom literature.

Daniel Stulac has made thorough studies of Isaiah 28-35 (*History*), Isaiah 5 (‘Charting New Paths in Modern-Critical Exegesis: An Agrarian-Rhetorical Analysis of Isaiah 5.’ *Biblical Interpretation* 27.3 (2019): 390-412.), Isaiah 65 (‘Rethinking Suspicion: A Canonical-Agrarian Reading of Isaiah 65.’ *Journal of Theological Interpretation* 9.2 (2015): 185-200), and 1 Kings 17-2 Kings 2 (*Life, Land, and Elijah in the Book of Kings*. Cambridge University Press, 2020.)

For an agrarian perspective on The Book of the Twelve Prophets, see Braaten, Laurie J. ‘God’s Good Land: The Agrarian Perspective of the Book of the Twelve.’ in Marlow Hilary, and Mark Harris (eds.) *The Oxford Handbook of the Bible and Ecology*, 148-165. Oxford University Press, 2022. On the Psalms, see McCann, J. Clinton. ‘Bread for the World: Toward an Agrarian Reading of the Psalter (or, Reading the Christ “Psalmologically”).’ *Review & Expositor* 112.2 (2015): 303-310. Amos, Hosea, and first Isaiah is studied by Hillary Marlow (*Prophets*).

¹²⁷ Davis, *Scripture*, 7.

The agrarian perspective is relevant for a study of the New Testament in its cultural context – still a predominantly agrarian society. This non-modern agrarian framework presented above has potential to draw together various, and seemingly disparate, themes and presentations of Jesus in Mark’s gospel. It bridges dichotomies between the human world and “nature”, and between “natural” and “supernatural” that often misguide interpretations of Mark (and its contexts).¹²⁸ For our study of Pan in relation to Mark’s presentations of Jesus, it is particularly significant that in this hybrid deity such distinctions completely collapse.

It is now time to map out the historical context of the world of Jesus, Mark, and Pan, followed by a presentation of the various aspects/functions of Pan that corresponds to (Mark’s) Jesus.

¹²⁸ This point is made also by Mark Harris who argues in similar line that “[O]ur modern cosmological worldview, which divides reality sharply into three discrete ontological domains – the human, the natural, and the supernatural worlds – is not well suited to grasping Mark’s point about the coming Kingdom of God; indeed, insofar as ecological approaches presuppose the modern cosmology, they may entirely misunderstand him.” (Harris, Mark. ‘Synoptic Gospels’, in Marlow, Hillary and Mark Harris, (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of the Bible and Ecology*, 211-227. Oxford University Press, 2022. 216.)

2 Mark, Jesus, and Pan in Context

In this chapter, I will sketch important aspects and circumstances relevant for this study related to Mark and Pan. First, I will discuss the question of Mark's provenance, then I focus on the general agrarian culture, and aspects today labelled as "political", "economic", and "religious", in relation to Mark. Next, I turn the focus to the cult of Pan, and its connection to imperial ideology and the rulers. Most attention will be given the cult of Pan in Palestine, especially at Paneas/Caesarea Philippi. Lastly, I will present conceptual overlaps between Pan and Jesus.

2.1 Placing Mark's Gospel

The scholarly debate on the provenance of the gospel of Mark has generally been centred around two options for the place of writing: Rome or Palestine/Syria. Evidence for a Roman provenance is mainly external, resting on the tradition of Mark's relation to the apostle Peter and his location in Rome.¹²⁹ Evidence for a Roman provenance rests also on the occurrence of Latinisms, and the assumption that Mark betrays a "defect" geography that supposedly rules out a Galilean or Palestinian origin.¹³⁰ In more recent scholarship, however, a growing number of scholars have raised doubts against a Roman provenance and providing various explanations for the "problematic" geography, have suggested instead a Galilean or Syrian provenance.¹³¹

Dean Chapman has proposed that the geographical "mistakes" in Mark are "the results of a paradigmatic difference between 20th century western culture and that of the first-century Mediterranean",¹³² and that the mistakes are "attributable not to ignorance but to a different cultural paradigm of geography."¹³³ Collins points out that Mark seems to locate

¹²⁹ Built mainly on the testimony from Papias (cited in Eusebius *Eccl. Hist.* 3.39.15), read in light of 1 Peter 5:13. Cf., also Acts 12:12, 25; 15:37; Col 4:19; 2 Tim 4:11; Phm v. 24.

¹³⁰ Theissen, Gerd. *The Gospels in Context: Social and Political History in the Synoptic Tradition*. Trans. Linda M. Maloney. T&T Clark, 1992. 237.

¹³¹ Among others, see Myers, Ched. *Binding the Strong Man: A Political Reading of Mark's Story of Jesus*. Maryknoll, 1988. 40-42; Marcus, Joel. *Mark 1-8*, Yale University Press, 2002. 25-37; Roskam, Hendrika Nicoline, (ed.), *The Purpose of the Gospel of Mark in its Historical and Social Context*. Brill, 2004. 75-114; Theissen, *Context*, 235-81; Boring, *Mark*, 15-20.

¹³² Chapman, Dean W. 'Locating the Gospel of Mark A Model of Agrarian Biography.' *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 25.1 (1995): 24-36. 24.

¹³³ Chapman, 'Locating', 25.

the Decapolis in a similar way as Pliny the Elder does.¹³⁴ It has further been shown that Latinisms occur in other sources not originated in Italy, that they are equally explicable in a Roman-occupied territory and “indicate rather the penetration in the socio-economic and administrative spheres of the colonized culture of Palestine”.¹³⁵

I contend, with these scholars, that the use of Latinisms does not necessarily points to Rome, and that Mark’s alleged “problematic” geographical references are not unexplainable, confused, or random. Instead, they reflect the understanding of geography of Mark’s non-modern agrarian culture. Geographic location (or space more generally, such as mountains, the sea, and the wilderness), is in Mark loaded with symbolic meaning: theological, ideological, and cosmological, and can evoke collective memories from Israel’s history, and allude to other known “texts”.¹³⁶ Thus, Mark’s geographical references should not be seen as incorrect information, but information of a different kind than mere location. Spatial references in Mark are geo-theological.

Scholars who situate Mark’s gospel in rural Palestine rather than urban Rome emphasise the focus on rural areas (Galilee) and rural people in the margins as well as the use of agrarian imagery (and lack of urban metaphors) typical of the ministry and teaching of Mark’s Jesus. Moreover, it is argued that Mark’s addressees seem to be immediately affected by the socio-political unrest and apocalyptic expectation of the Jewish War (66-73 CE).¹³⁷ The text in Mark, it is assumed, reflects mainly the profile of Mark’s local community, and consequently, that Mark’s community themselves were mainly rural peasants.¹³⁸ The disciples of Jesus in the text “are not depicted historically but ideologically in order to mirror the disciples outside the story”, says Waetjen.¹³⁹ The origin of Mark should thus, according to these views, be located in the political unrest of

¹³⁴ Collins, *Mark*, 9. For an overview of various approaches to Markan geography and space, see Stewart, Eric Clark. *Gathered Around Jesus: An Alternative Spatial Practice in the Gospel of Mark*. University of Notre Dame, 2005. Ch. 1.

¹³⁵ Myers, *Binding*, 74. So also, Collins, *Mark*, 9-10, 100, and Waetjen, Herman C. *A Reordering of Power: A Socio-Political Reading of Mark’s Gospel*. Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2014. 13.

¹³⁶ Kim, Sun Wook. *Jesus and the Missional Movement in Galilee: Markan Spatial Presentation and Its Hermeneutical Significance*. Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2019.

¹³⁷ Boring (*Mark*, 17) states that “Chapter 13 points to a community directly affected by the Jewish revolt in Palestine. The readers are themselves in the situation of crisis brought about by the war (13:14, 37). The community is not undergoing direct persecution in the sense that it is criminal to confess Christian faith, yet it stands in tension with its environment and may be harassed and suffer violence from both Jewish and Gentile authorities (13:9). In chapter 13 Jesus speaks past the disciples to the readers. The chaos brought about by the war is their problem.”

¹³⁸ Boring, *Mark*, 16; Waetjen, *Reordering*, 5-7, 15-16.

¹³⁹ Waetjen, *Reordering*, 16-17.

rural Palestine/Syria around year 70, and not in urban Rome under the persecutions of Nero.

However, this type of approach of constructing a specific – isolated – community from the text, which is presumed to reflect (mainly? only?) the story of the community and was then projected to the stories of Jesus, easily falls prey to a circular reasoning, and has been rightly criticized.¹⁴⁰ The relatively scant and disputed evidence and the lack of consensus for a proposal for a Markan provenance and *sitz im leben*, should make us cautious about too optimistic and too specific reconstructions of local isolated “Markan communities”.

I contend that Mark’s overall message makes most sense if we assume that the implied readers are at home in a context in which Mark’s rural colouring, and the significant geographical and spatial aspects of his gospel, would have been relatable. A first audience in northern Palestine/southern Syria, it seems to me, corresponds better to Mark’s text and message. Mark’s profile, however, has more to do with the authors own view of Jesus in the light of values and theology derived from Jewish tradition, in the situation of being under the Empire. Even if Mark’s text to some extent mirrors immediate needs of a more specific audience, the text was by its nature also open to a broader audience, and probably intended to be so.

According to a broad consensus, the Gospel of Mark was written to a mixed Greek-speaking community of both Jews and (predominantly) non-Jews. Analysis of Mark’s narrative structure shows a progressive arrangement of Mark’s gentile episodes that points to an openness to gentiles. Mark also explains Jewish customs (7:3-4). Jesus’ travels to the gentile areas narrated in Mark, “likely prefigured, or perhaps even inaugurated, the mission to the gentiles”, as Collins (and others) recognises.¹⁴¹

Early Christian communities were not isolated but had, as Michael Thompson concludes, “the motivation and the means to communicate often and in depth with each other”.¹⁴² It is reasonable that the local

¹⁴⁰ See, Peterson, Dwight. *The Origins of Mark: The Markan Community in Current Debate*. Brill, 2021. Richard Bauckham, ‘For Whom Were the Gospels Written?’ in Bauckham, (ed.), *The Gospel for All Christians: Rethinking the Gospel Audiences*. Eerdmans, 1998. 9-48; Tolbert, Mary Ann. *Sowing the Gospel: Mark’s World in Literary-Historical Perspective*. Fortress Press, 1996.

¹⁴¹ Collins, *Mark*, 9.

¹⁴² Thompson, Michael B., ‘The Holy Internet: Communication Between Churches in the First Christian Generation.’ In Richard Bauckham, (ed.), *The Gospels for all Christians: Rethinking the Gospel Audiences*, 49-70. Eerdmans, 1998. 68.

geographical references, and the general circumstances of Mark's first recipients would have been more widely known and understood. Jews living in the diaspora must have had a fairly good knowledge of their holy Land and its places, loaded with historical significance in their tradition. The significance of geography and space in Mark has more to do with the geo-theological and eschatological significance of the places and spaces in Jewish thought, and thus for Jesus and Mark, than it has on the basis of an isolated "Markan community", reflecting their local sentiments.

Most of the places mentioned in Mark, including the significant locations in the Hermon area – the northern limit and apex of the promised land known as Baal-Hermon/Baal-Gad – would certainly have been well-known, from word of mouth, and/or from the reading and hearing of Scriptures (see 2.11.1 below). Moreover, the cult of Pan was popular and well spread by this time in the Roman empire, not least in the city of Rome. Since the road between Tyre and Damascus (two centres of early Christianity) passed through Paneas/Caesarea Philippi, Paul and many other travellers would have passed by the spectacular cave below Hermon. While the rural/agrarian flavour of the gospel, and the agrarian sensibilities of subsistence peasants (soon to be laid out) would speak most closely to actual peasants and rural persons, we should not assume a strict urban-rural dichotomy in which urban people in an urban setting would have no awareness or receptivity to the agrarian realities,¹⁴³ as the situation in our modern society could be described.

Neither Mark nor his audience were intellectually isolated in time. The gospel of Mark reflects not only the situation at the time it was composed, but also the times that led to it. We should assume that for Mark and his audience, like for all humans, the present was intelligible in the light of a (hi)story of the past, that also formed expectations of the future. Our contextualisation assumes that the time of Jesus, but also the more distant times of Jewish history, were part of a common memory by Mark and his audience. Moreover, I agree with Ched Myers, that "the social worlds intrinsic and extrinsic to the text [...] roughly correspond", and that "this made it all the easier for Mark to insert into his story of Jesus issues that were pressing in Mark's time."¹⁴⁴ Myers states that

¹⁴³ Robinson, Thomas A. *Who Were the First Christians?: Dismanteling the Urban Thesis*. Oxford University Press, 2016. 65-90; Rich, John, and Andrew Wallace-Hadrill, (eds.), *City and Country in the Ancient World*. Routledge, 2003.

¹⁴⁴ Myers, *Binding*, 75.

[W]hat was sporadic, predominantly rural resistance to Roman colonialism in Palestine at the time of Jesus had coalesced into a major, Jerusalem-centered insurrection at the time Mark wrote. Nevertheless, the basic social structures and dynamics that characterized this era did not alter significantly. Prophetic sects and social banditry plagued the colonial administrators throughout. No major land or tax reform altered the relationships of production, though local economic conditions naturally fluctuated, and generally deteriorated as the revolt drew closer.¹⁴⁵

We can add to this that the extrinsic social world of the text also roughly corresponds macro sociologically to the times of Israel's more distant past as written in the Jewish Scriptures, which made it easier for Mark to insert into his story of Jesus issues that had been pressing for generations of his own people.

2.1.1 The Purpose of Mark

The aim of the Gospel is to provide and reassure a specific interpretation of Jesus' messiahship, his death and resurrection, and to persuade the intended readers to assent and take part in the movement founded by him. The question of Jesus' identity and what the embracement of it entailed (faithful discipleship), is certainly the primary message of Mark. For the purpose of my study, I assume that the gospel of Christ, as presented in its historical context, addressed fundamental material and bodily needs of common peoples struggling for their existence. It addressed predicaments and perils and – importantly – a narrative among, or *vis-à-vis* other narratives preached and practiced by surrounding traditions. Mark's gospel challenged the ideology of the Greco-Roman world, also with regard to the material environment – how things work in nature, what is wrong with it and how to deal with it. It also challenged other divine beings and presented Christ *vis-à-vis* other spiritual beings and powers.

The tense and distressed socio-political situation which had developed by the time of the Jewish war is possibly an immediate factor that caused Mark to write his gospel (or sparked his audience to request it), and it is plausible that Mark addressed his gospel to a community in (rural northern) Palestine or southern Syria to which the upheavals and “rumours of war” (Mk 13:7) created immediate worries and concerns about Christ's power *vis-à-vis* the Romans and their divine powers, his immediate(?) return, and discipleship to him. This situation was, however, not unknown

¹⁴⁵ Myers, *Binding*, 75.

to other communities of Christ-believers around the Empire, and the chaotic political situation and the rumours of war would have been familiar to a broader audience in the years of Galba, Otho, and Vitellius, and the beginning of Vespasian's rule (68-69 CE). Moreover, a broader audience could still relate to Mark's rural focus, and share an agrarian identity, experiences, and values, as we will see.

A possible and interesting candidate for Mark's first addressees, would be a community in Caesarea Philippi.¹⁴⁶ As we will see, the events at this location have a climactic geographic and narratological position in Mark (see 3.4). Moreover, I will argue that the narratives centred around Caesarea Philippi/Mount Hermon in Mark (and Matthew) are influenced by apocalyptic traditions from notably 1 Enoch, which situates the myth of the origin of the demonic world, and Enoch's visionary revelation in this location. These traditions are, as we will see, probably connected to a Petrine tradition, which indicates that this tradition originated and developed in the area itself by local communities (see 3.5). This might suggest that Mark and his audience had a strong relation to this place, and that would correspond well with the features of the text in Mark: its apocalyptic flavour, attention to the demonic world, his gentile focus, and the climactic and revelatory positioning of the events around Caesarea Philippi. Moreover, this apocalyptic tradition stemming from the Hermon area might connect the author of Mark to Peter (or later Petrine traditions) and his experiences on the "holy mountain", and thus, confirm the patristic sources that links Mark with Peter. Perhaps Vespasian's visit to Paneas/Caesarea Philippi in 67 CE, or Titus' longer stay in the city, after Vespasian had become emperor, might have provoked Mark's writing. According to Josephus, Titus "stayed there for a considerable amount of time" and killed 2500 Jewish prisoners in the city.¹⁴⁷ While this hypothesis would put the cult of Pan in Paneas/Caesarea Philippi in an even more thought-provoking situation, I do not rest my contextualisation or interpretation of Mark on this assumption but leave it as an interesting possibility worth consideration.

¹⁴⁶ Suggested also by Klaus Berger (*Einführung in Formgeschichte*. A. Francke Verlag, 1987).

¹⁴⁷ Josephus reports: "But as for Titus, he marched from that Cesarea which lay by the sea-side, and came to that which is named Cesarea Philippi, and staid there a considerable time, and exhibited all sorts of shows there. And here a great number of the captives were destroyed, some being thrown to wild beasts, and others in multitudes forced to kill one another, as if they were their enemies" (*JW* 7.2.1). "While Titus was at Cesarea [Philippi], he solemnized the birthday of his brother Domitian after a splendid manner, and inflicted a great deal of the punishment intended for the Jews in honour of him; for the number of those that were now slain in fighting with the beasts, and were burnt, and fought with one another, exceeded two thousand five hundred" (*JW* 7.3.1).

To summarize, I take an agnostic position on the question of Mark's authorship, place of writing, and addressees, but lean toward a provenance of Mark in the rural East, perhaps Caesarea Philippi, rather than in Rome. Whatever the case may be, I presume that the attention for and symbolic significance of locations and space, and his rural profile, would have been relevant to a broader audience throughout the Roman Empire. I also presume that the cult of Pan in Paneas/Caesarea Philippi was known beyond the city and the province, and that allusions to Pan could have been picked up by the first recipients of Mark, whether they were at home in Rome, Alexandria, or wherever, though not equally by all and everywhere.

We continue the contextualisation by presenting the agrarian culture of the first century, and the intrinsic connections between soil, food, household, land, and community, and how this was related to imperial ideology, theology, and cosmology. The focus will be on the world in the text on the assumption that this generally corresponds to situations extrinsic to the text.

2.2 Agrarian Culture

In New Testament time, a vast majority of the population was regularly involved in agricultural activities.¹⁴⁸ In Roman times – as well as in most or all pre-modern societies – agriculture (i.e., farming, herding, fishing, and other types of food production) was by far the most important economic sector and the most basic economic activity.¹⁴⁹ Since human (and animal) labour constituted the main energy input in agricultural systems, it can be said that for most people, most of the time spent awake involved working with food production of some sort. For the elite – comprising a tiny minority of the population – investments and profits centred mainly around agricultural production and goods.¹⁵⁰ Success in agriculture affected virtually everything else and was a major concern for subsistence peasants, as well as for the emperor. Cities were to a large degree dependent on and sustained by the countryside surrounding the city.¹⁵¹ In Rome, by the time of Christ, the countryside surrounding the capital city could no longer provide for the city, making it dependent on shipping grain from the provinces, especially from northern Africa. The

¹⁴⁸ Or more specific, an “advanced agrarian society”. Hanson, Kenneth C., and Douglas E. Oakman. *Palestine in the Time of Jesus: Social Structures and Social Conflicts*. Fortress Press, 1998. 95.

¹⁴⁹ Hughes, *Environmental Problems*, 111.

¹⁵⁰ Hughes, *Environmental Problems*, 111.

¹⁵¹ Robinson, *First Christians*, 65-90; Rich and Wallace-Hadrill, *City and Country*.

grain supply was immensely important and crucial for the building and sustenance of the Empire, and lack of bread could destabilise Rome and threaten its power.¹⁵²

In rural Palestine, the basic unit of production was mainly small self-sufficient family-based households.¹⁵³ The household-unit constituted a fundamental social group, rooted in a specific place, a house (οἶκος/οικία), and generally, a piece of land (ἀγρός), on which the members of the household made their living, shared work, resources and meals, and participated in worship.¹⁵⁴ The οἶκος was integrated in a larger framework of a kin group and a village, that constituted a set of social relations, and the “three circles around the person that described him or her”, as Halvor Moxnes states.¹⁵⁵ Small-scale household farms were based on diversified cultivation of annual and perennial crops, orcharding, herding of cattle, small-scale fishing and forestry, etcetera. They were complex ecological units, managed with adaptation to various regional and local factors, such as climate, topography, soil quality, and wind and sun exposure, using every portion of land for its most suitable purpose, and timing every measure in the right season.¹⁵⁶ The kin group and village, we can assume, played a crucial role for barter, crop-sharing, cooperation in labour intense seasons, and shared means of production, such as oil- and wine presses and flour mills.¹⁵⁷ It is likely that such matters were discussed and decided in the local synagogue.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵² James, Paul. *Food Provisions for Ancient Rome: A Supply Chain Approach*. Routledge, 2020. 4-6.

Tacitus reports that Emperor Tiberius complained to the Senate that “the very existence of the people of Rome is daily at the mercy of uncertain waves and storms.” Tacitus, *Annals*, 3.54, quoted in Montgomery, David R. *Dirt: The Erosion of Civilizations*. University of California Press, 2007. 64.

¹⁵³ Horsley, Richard. *Hearing the Whole Story: The Politics of Plot in Mark's Gospel*. Westminster John Knox Press, 2001. 117. See also Oakman, Douglas E., ‘Execrating? Or Execrable Peasants!’ In Fiensy, D.A. and Hawkins R.K. (Eds). *The Galilean Economy in the Time of Jesus*. 139-164. Society of Biblical Literature, 2013, 139-164; Hanson, Kenneth C. ‘The Galilean Fishing Economy and the Jesus Tradition’. *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 27.3 (1997): 99-111. 100; Malina, Bruce J. *The New Testament World: Insights from Cultural Anthropology*. Westminster John Knox Press, 2001. 139-140; Stambaugh, John E., and David L. Balch. *The New Testament in its Social Environment*. Westminster John Knox Press, 1986. 68-69.

¹⁵⁴ Moxnes, Halvor. *Putting Jesus in Place: A Radical Vision of Household and Kingdom*. Westminster John Knox Press, 2003. 29-30; Henze, Matthias, and Rodney A. Werline, (eds.) *Early Judaism and Its Modern Interpreters*. SBL Press, 2020. 51-52.

¹⁵⁵ Moxnes, *Putting*, 31-32.

¹⁵⁶ Hughes, *Environmental Problems*, 128.

¹⁵⁷ For an elaborated presentation, see Davis, *Scripture*, ch. 8.

¹⁵⁸ Besides a place for sermons, prayer, reading of Scriptures and study, the synagogues functioned as a community centre, in similar ways as the pagan temples did. See Levine, Lee I. *The Ancient Synagogue: The First Thousand Years*. Yale University Press, 2000. 128-134, and Horsley, *Hearing*, 39.

2.3 YHWH's or Rome's Land?

The life of agrarian Palestine pictured above is, however, somewhat idealized since it was threatened by several factors. The reality reflected in the texts in Mark's gospel is a world of diseases, disabilities, demon possessions, hunger, lack of food, poverty, storms, fear, betrayal, disputes, beheadings, murders, rumours of war, earthquakes, etcetera. While this reflects human predicaments of most times and places, it particularly reflects the time of social and political unease in first-century Palestine under the empire, and the building of tensions that boiled over in the revolt/war in 66-73 CE.

By the time of Jesus' ministry, Palestine had been under Roman rule for almost a century. Far from a picture of an idyllic peaceful countryside, peasants were controlled by the ruling elite, ultimately under the authority of the emperor, under increasing burdens of debts, taxes, tributes, leases, rents, and tolls. The value of the peasants' production, be it crop yields, fish, handcraft, or work of day laborers, flowed upwards via tax- and toll collectors, client-kings (like Herod Antipas) and ultimately to the emperor, who "became wealthy beyond imagination".¹⁵⁹

In Galilee, "King" Herod Antipas ruled as tetrarch under the patronage of the Emperor, in the city of Sepphoris – the heart of Galilee only 6 km from Nazareth and clearly visible from the countryside below. He refurbished the city in Greco-Roman style, including a theatre during the first decades of his rule before moving to Tiberias.¹⁶⁰ Antipas' founding of the new capital city of Tiberias was, as Crossan states, a strategic step in his program of "Romanization by urbanization for commercialization"; a way to increase the tax base from Galilee, in order to obtain promotion from the Emperor.¹⁶¹ His imperial program was worked out strategically since opposition or even revolt among the peasant Galileans was a risk. The marriage with his brother Philip's former wife, the Hasmonean Herodias, established a Herodian-Hasmonean connection important for acceptance among Jews. With the new strategic capital at the shore of the sea of Galilee, Antipas opted for exploiting the crops of the sea, like he did with the crops of the land from the fields of the Sepphoris area. As Crossan

¹⁵⁹ Hanson, 'Galilean Fishing Economy', 101. A flow chart presented by Hanson suggests an intricate network of economic (and social) relations and with regard to Galilean fishing industry, which clearly demonstrates that the surplus of the peasant production (not only fish) went to the ruling elite.

¹⁶⁰ Batey, Richard A. 'Sepphoris and the Jesus Movement'. *New Testament Studies* 47.3 (2001): 402-409.

¹⁶¹ Crossan, John Dominic. *God & Empire: Jesus Against Rome, Then and Now*. Harper Collins Publisher, 2007. 101-104. See also Freyne, *Jesus*, 16.

aptly puts it: “having learned, as it were, how to multiply loaves in the valleys around Sepphoris, he would now learn how to multiply fishes in the waters around Tiberias.”¹⁶² The Roman-style urban centers which surrounded and penetrated Galilee represented the lavish lifestyle of the ruling elites that controlled the surrounding land and drained the Galilean peasants of material and human resources and created social tensions. They were in Horsley’s words “foreign bodies imposed on the Galilean social landscape”.¹⁶³

The Herodians’ building projects also represented the ideology and theology of Roman imperialism. Herod the Great erected a temple to Augustus (and Roma) in Sebaste, the former capital of the northern kingdom of Israel, renamed after Augustus’ Greek name. A second temple to August was built in Caesarea (Maritima) named after the same emperor. The third temple was located right in front of the cave of Pan, who was worshiped there together with the emperor, as we will examine more closely later in this chapter. All three temples were located strategically at well-chosen places.¹⁶⁴ The imperial cult was promoted by Pilate (as expected of a Roman provincial governor) by building a *Tiberium* in Caesarea Maritima (annexed to the Augusteum), and by using Roman cultic items in his coinage.¹⁶⁵ Moreover, people in Nazareth and the rest of Galilee in Jesus’ time were well aware of Rome’s military power, given the brutal response from Roman legions to the Jewish revolt in 4 BCE, when Sepphoris was burnt down, and its inhabitants reduced to slaves.¹⁶⁶ The violent force of Rome was hardly forgotten by the time Mark was composed, rather it was actualized and intensified as the resistance against Roman rule grew, in the years when the Jewish War was approaching.

2.3.1 Land Redistribution

Another important development that threatened peasant life and its social structure was latifundization; an increase of larger farming units (latifundia) owned by (distant) landlords and run by hired workers, tenants, or slaves (the parable of the vineyard in Mk 12:1-12 most likely reflects

¹⁶² Crossan, *God & Empire*, 103.

¹⁶³ Horsley, *Hearing*, 40.

¹⁶⁴ See Berlin, Andrea M. ‘Herod, Augustus, and the Augusteum at the Paneion’, in *Eretz-Israel: Archaeological, Historical and Geographical Studies* 31.1 (2015): 1-11; Freyne, *Jesus*. 133-134.

¹⁶⁵ Taylor, Joan E. ‘Pontius Pilate and the Imperial Cult in Roman Judaea’. *New Testament Studies*, 2006, Vol.52: 555-582.

¹⁶⁶ *JW* 2.5.1; *Ant* 17.10.9. Horsley, *Hearing*, 34.

this reality).¹⁶⁷ Land was confiscated from peasant landowners either by force or due to the small holders' incapability to pay taxes and loans, and often granted to military veterans.¹⁶⁸ In Italy, this development accelerated in the second century BCE and continued into imperial time.¹⁶⁹ In second temple Palestine, the same development took place,¹⁷⁰ and similar patterns can be seen during Israel's history of subjugation to earlier empires, as reflected in Neh 5:3-5, and Dan 11:39.¹⁷¹ Higher demands for staple-crops drove production from diversified small subsistence farms towards monocropping of notably grain, olives, and wine. Such changes in land-managements affected the landscape and its ecology, and often led to erosion of soil fertility,¹⁷² made the local domestic economies dependent on price and the demands of a larger political economy,¹⁷³ and largely affected the structure of labour.¹⁷⁴

These socio-political conditions, thus, threatened the viability of peasant household and village communities, which were, "probably beginning to disintegrate, with increased tensions, malnutrition, and illness."¹⁷⁵ They also made the peasants of Galilee responsive to hopeful renewal movements and prophets, such as that of Jesus.¹⁷⁶ Moreover, as argued by Freyne, the changing economic situation for peasant Galileans, "brought

¹⁶⁷ Kloppenborg, John S. *The Tenants of the Vineyard: Ideology, Economics, and Agrarian Conflict in Jewish Palestine*. Mohr Siebeck, 2006. 289.

¹⁶⁸ Freyne, *Galilee and Gospel*, 98-99; Stambaugh and Balch, *Social Environment*, 91.

¹⁶⁹ Montgomery, *Dirt*, 63-64.

¹⁷⁰ Kloppenborg, John. 'The Growth and Impact of Agricultural Tenancy in Jewish Palestine (III BCE-I CE)'. *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 51.1 (2008): 31-66.)

¹⁷¹ "There were also those who said, 'We are having to pledge our fields, our vineyards, and our houses in order to get grain during the famine.' And there were those who said, 'We are having to borrow money on our fields and vineyards to pay the king's tax. Now our flesh is the same as that of our kindred; our children are the same as their children; and yet we are forcing our sons and daughters to be slaves, and some of our daughters have been ravished; we are powerless, and our fields and vineyards now belong to others.' Others were saying, 'We are mortgaging our fields, our vineyards and our homes to get grain during the famine.' Still others were saying, 'We have had to borrow money to pay the king's tax on our fields and vineyards. Although we are of the same flesh and blood as our fellow Jews and though our children are as good as theirs, yet we have to subject our sons and daughters to slavery. Some of our daughters have already been enslaved, but we are powerless, because our fields and our vineyards belong to others.'" (Neh 5:3-5).

"He [i.e., the king of the north (11:15), likely Antiochus IV Epiphanes] will make them rulers over many people and distribute the cultivated land (χώραν) as a gifts (εἰς δωρεάν). (Dan 11:39, my translation of LXX). See also Davis, *Scripture*, 149-150 and Freyne, *Galilee and Gospel*, 98.

¹⁷² Hughes, *Environmental Problems*, 122; Montgomery, *Dirt*, 62-66.

¹⁷³ Redman, Charles L. *Human Impact on Ancient Environments*. The University of Arizona Press, 1999. 187; Hanson, 'Galilean Fishing Economy', 100.

¹⁷⁴ Kloppenborg concludes that "[t]he creation of large estates, then, had profound effects on the structure of the economy: by reorienting production from local consumptions to an export economy; by creating and exploiting a class of underemployed non-slave labourers; by forcing smallholders to marginal land; and by drawing on the labour inputs from underemployed non-slaves labour and smallholders at certain key periods of the cycle of agricultural production." Kloppenborg, *The Tenants*, 289. See also Kloppenborg, 'Growth and Impact', 50-62.

¹⁷⁵ Horsley, *Hearing*. 117.

¹⁷⁶ Horsley, *Hearing*. 117.

about a change of values among this ever-increasing group of deprived and harassed small land-owners” and the loss of land led to the erosion of values and practices rooted in an agrarian lifestyle: agricultural offerings, YHWH’s ultimate ownership of land, the sacral character of the land and its fruits, and the need to care for God’s creation. According to Freyne, “The supplanting of a mode of production based on Yahwe’s seasonal blessing to Israel, for one driven by greed, opulence and exploitation, inevitably fractured the tenuous connection between land, people and religious concerns.”¹⁷⁷ This points to a situation of an increasing number of disenfranchised, landless people with a collective memory and ideal of possessing their land.¹⁷⁸

In other words, matters of food supply, health, and safety, were dependant on land stewardship and ownership, which in turn were dependant on the politics of the imperial and national rulers (anchored in ideology, theology, and cosmology). Thus, for a fisherman, shepherd, craftsperson, or peasant farmer in first-century Palestine, especially in the areas of Jesus’ ministry (as presented in Mark), this would have affected not only their livelihood, but threatened their relation to the inherited Land given by YHWH as a blessing, and ultimately their identity as YHWH’s chosen people and the hope for the future.

2.3.2 Land Restoration

As convincingly presented and argued by Davis, the Hebrew Bible envisions an ideal of land possession and management based on small-scale, local households, “engaging in subsistence agriculture and supported by networks of mutual assistance and trade”.¹⁷⁹ Fundamental is also the idea that the land belonged to YHWH, and was Israel’s covenantal allotment.¹⁸⁰ The covenant, seen as “triangulated relationship among Israel, the land, and YHWH”, stipulated the ethical responsibilities of how to live in the land, Davis points out.¹⁸¹ Building on Simkins’, Fretheim’s, and particularly C. J. H. Wright’s model of an “ethical triangle” as a model for the theological relationship of ethics, social community, and the

¹⁷⁷ Freyne, *Jesus*, 46.

¹⁷⁸ The ideal in the time of Simon Maccabeus expressed in 1 Macc 14:8 (“They tilled their land in peace; the ground gave its increase, and the trees of the plains their fruit/καὶ ἦσαν γεωργοῦντες τὴν γῆν αὐτῶν μετ’ εἰρήνης καὶ ἡ γῆ ἐδίδου τὰ γενήματα αὐτῆς καὶ τὰ ξύλα τῶν πεδίων τὸν καρπὸν αὐτῶν” NRSV/LXX) certainly reflects a biblical ideal, that “seems to have persisted into the Roman period, despite pressures to the contrary”, according to Freyne (*Galilee and Gospel*, 98). See also Davis, *Scripture*, 102.

¹⁷⁹ Davis, *Scripture*, 102.

¹⁸⁰ Davis, *Scripture*, 106.

¹⁸¹ Davis, *Scripture*, 40.

economic realities, Hillary Marlow has developed this triangular model (God – Israel – the Land) as an “ecological triangle” between God, humanity, and non-human creation.¹⁸² This triangle, says Marlow, “seeks to identify ways in which the selected Old Testament texts exhibit interrelationship – between God and the earth as well as between God and human beings, and also between humanity and the non-human creation.” Marlow points out several examples of the relation between the laws of God and the laws of nature, or in other words, how (dis)obedience to Gods laws has consequences for the land. In Jeremiah, the prophet asks, “Why is the land ruined and laid waste like a wilderness so that no one passes through?” (9:12b), followed by the answer “Because they have forsaken my law” (9:13a). Marlow comments:

The text moves seamlessly between two concepts that might, at first glance, seem to belong in two different categories: the desolation of the natural landscape, and the failure of Judah to keep God’s law. Such a juxtaposition of natural disaster and moral failure is not unique to Jeremiah; it represents an important strand in the thought and theology of many biblical authors.¹⁸³

In first-century Judaism, the interest in the land of Israel, its restoration and cleansing were intense, and took various expressions. Territorial aspiration was a burning issue with sometimes violent expressions. The question of (Mark’s) Jesus’ attitudes to Israel and Jewish identity is still under debate, and Mark’s gospel presents a subtle and ambiguous picture.

While Mark’s Jesus does not side with the militaristic revolutionary parties, he shows a strong continuity with Israel’s geographical consciousness and Jewish identity.¹⁸⁴ Mark draws significantly from Jewish traditions of land restoration and covenantal renewal, as we will see. The ministry of Mark’s Jesus is initially centred in Galilee and focused on his fellow Jews. On the other hand, the Markan Jesus crosses the boundaries between Jews and gentiles, as the crossing of the sea “to the other side” symbolizes and signifies.¹⁸⁵ Mark, in presenting his gospel of the kingdom of God and Jesus the Messiah, appropriates Jewish scripture and tradition in both continuity and discontinuity with contemporary Jewish interpretations. The author of Mark creatively interpreted the

¹⁸² Marlow, *Biblical Prophets*, 109-111.

¹⁸³ Marlow, Hilary. ‘Law and the Ruining of the Land: Deuteronomy and Jeremiah in Dialogue’. *Political Theology* 14.5 (2013): 650-660. 651.

¹⁸⁴ Burge, Gary M. *Jesus and the Land: The New Testament Challenge to ‘Holy Land’ Theology*. Baker Academic, 2010. 30-31. Freyne, *Jesus*, 75-80.

¹⁸⁵ Observed by several scholars, see e.g., Iverson, Kelly. *Gentiles in the Gospel of Mark: ‘Even the Dogs Under the Table Eat the Children’s Crumbs’*. Bloomsbury Publishing, 2007. 17-18. Myers, *Binding*, 181-185.

Jewish tradition in the light of the Christ-event and drew together various themes from existing traditions and applied these to Jesus. While the kingdom of God envisioned by Mark was not to be established through a holy war fought with weapons (as in Hasmonean times), it is not an entirely spiritualized vision in the sense that the land promises in Jewish eschatological expectations are fulfilled in the person of Christ, but as Douglas Moo reasons, the land promise in the New Testament “has not simply been spiritualized or ‘Christified’, but universalized”. The restoration of the world is not reduced to humans only but includes the physical cosmos.¹⁸⁶ The inbreak of the kingdom of God, in Mark, is played out in the material world, as well as in the spiritual, and the conflict against the oppressive forces that oppose God’s rule in Mark seems to be framed on a cosmic scale, with an apocalyptic flavour.

2.4 Mark’s Cosmic Eschatology

As several interpreters have observed, Mark’s presentation of Jesus is highly influenced by an apocalyptic worldview and interprets the Jesus event in terms of the cosmology and eschatology in the Jewish apocalyptic tradition.¹⁸⁷ This does not mean that Mark’s gospel is purely “spiritual” or detached from earthly matters. Rather, Mark reflects a historical and social reality in a time of strong imperial dominion. Elisabeth Shively argues that Mark uses symbols from, and shares the same worldview as found in Jewish apocalyptic thinking, in which “cosmic and earthly conflicts intersect”, a cosmic battle that is “carried out in the ministry of Jesus”, according to Shively.¹⁸⁸ Michael Bird makes a similar point:

[T]he climactic events of Jesus’ life reveal heavenly signs, provide portents of destruction, and offer glimpses of a glory that lies beyond the veil of human knowledge. In addition to Jesus’ teachings that reveal the mysteries of the kingdom, and beyond Jesus’ exorcism that fight the battle against the evil one, the Markan narrative exhibits key moments where heaven and earth

¹⁸⁶ Moo, Douglas J. ‘Nature in the New Creation: New Testament Eschatology and the Environment.’ *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 49.3 (2006): 449-488. 458.

¹⁸⁷ Bird, Michael F. ‘Tearing the Heavens and Shaking the Heavenlies: Mark’s Cosmology in its Apocalyptic Context’ in Pennington, J. T., and McDonough, S.M. (eds.) *Cosmology and New Testament Theology*, 45-59. Vol. 355. Bloomsbury Publishing, 2008; McDonough, *Christ as Creator*, Ch 2. Apocalyptic influences in Mark will be further elaborated in 3.5.

¹⁸⁸ Shively, Elizabeth E. *Apocalyptic Imagination in the Gospel of Mark : The Literary and Theological Role of Mark 3:22-30*. De Gruyter, Inc., 2012. 1.

meet, and readers gain a panoramic view of Mark's symbolic universe.¹⁸⁹

Thus, the revelation of Jesus' cosmic rulership in Mark corresponds to his earthly ministry and teaching, relevant for ordinary people in a situation of oppression and social tensions. In Mark's worldview, the cosmic order (or disorder) has spatial, political, social, and religious dimensions. Freyne argues that Jesus' motivation was "based on his understanding of Israel's God as the creator God, and that this perspective determines the manner in which he appropriates certain aspects of his tradition" and the idea of God's ruling entailed a rulership over the whole universe and that this had in Second Temple Judaism both political and cosmic reference.¹⁹⁰ Freyne's view follows the recent scholarly development towards emphasizing the theme of (re-)creation in Mark and the New Testament in general, as we saw. We have good reasons to assume that Jesus' proclamation of the coming kingdom presented by Mark, entailed the notion that Jesus' cosmic rulership anticipated a renewed and redeemed creation that included the cosmic spheres as well as human and earthly spheres.

2.5 On Earth as it is in Heaven: Macro-Cosmos in Micro-Cosmos

The idea that the cosmic realities were interrelated to the earthly realities was a generally held idea in antiquity, and can be seen in Jewish, Greek, and Roman literature. The workings of the universe were congruent to the workings of material life, of society, and of human mind – an idea that was especially pronounced in Roman Stoicism. The cosmic order – the movements of celestial bodies, the hierarchy of divine beings and layers of heavens – affected, and indeed governed the different microcosms of human life, from politics, ethics, and warfare to households, farming, and ecology.¹⁹¹ This explains the intense interest in astrology, according to which it made perfect sense to look for the stars or the moon, or also the

¹⁸⁹ Bird, 'Tearing', 47.

¹⁹⁰ Freyne, *Jesus*, 138.

¹⁹¹ See, Hughes, *Environmental Problems*, 43-44; Glacken, Clarence J. *Traces on the Rhodian Shore: Nature and Culture in the Western Thought from Ancient Times to the End of the Eighteenth Century*. University of California Press, 1967. 14-17; Pennington, Jonathan T. and Sean M. McDonough, (eds.), *Cosmology and New Testament Theology*. Bloomsbury Publishing, 2008. 18; McDonough, *Christ as Creator*, Ch 3.

flight of birds, to discern when to harvest, or go to war.¹⁹² Natural disasters such as pests, famines, and earthquakes were commonly seen as divine agency in creation, as a response to human behaviour.¹⁹³ It also made sense for the New Testament authors – especially Mark – to perceive Jesus as the key protagonist in a cosmic battle, and assume that the apocalyptic expectations of the return of Christ and the coming of the kingdom entailed a cataclysmic cosmic re-configuration (or really a re-creation) and victory over demonic and political powers (between which there was no clear distinction). In both Jewish royal ideology and Roman Imperial ideology, the order of cosmos and society were intrinsically linked to the ruler’s divine legitimization. The king/emperor (ideally) ruled on behalf of the god/gods, upholding cosmic order by means of moral virtue among the people, peace and justice in society, and fruitfulness of nature/the land – providing food for the people. Heaven’s politics was perceived in analogy with human politics. In Mark, this analogical thinking comes to the fore in the use of celestial concepts in the eschatological discourse (13:24-37) but is paramount to understanding Mark’s gospel and ancient texts and contexts in general.

2.6 Competing Utopias: Kingdom of God or Imperial Golden Age?

Mark’s gospel of the “good news” of the “son of God” coming with the “kingdom of God” would most likely, in Greco-Roman culture, suggest a comparison with, and a collision with the claims of the emperor.¹⁹⁴ The introduction Ἀρχὴ τοῦ εὐαγγελίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ [υἱοῦ θεοῦ] (Mark 1:1) certainly echoes both the creation account in Gen 1:1 and the good news of the coming of God’s rule and power in deutero-Isaiah (notably 40:9-10. See 4.4). These expectations of a dawning new era would likely, in the apocalyptic atmosphere of first-century Palestine, also carry anti-imperial

¹⁹² Gee, Emma. *Ovid, Aratus and Augustus: Astronomy in Ovid's Fasti*. Cambridge University Press, 2000, especially 126ff.

¹⁹³ The relation between God and the natural world in the *Sibylline Oracles* provides a good example of an “intriguing blend of archaic Greek epic, Hellenistic Jewish and early Christian traditions whose central preoccupation is precisely the interface between the divine will and, humanity and the environment.” See Van Noorden, Helen. ‘The Ecology of the Sibylline Oracle’. In Hunt, Alisia and Hilary Marlow (eds.): *Ecology and Theology in the Ancient World: Cross-Disciplinary Perspectives*, 25-39. Bloomsbury Academic, 2019. 25.

¹⁹⁴ A compilation of honorific titles and features of both the Caesar and Christ is provided in Evans, *Mark*, lxxxiii-xciii. Evans states that “the Markan evangelist presents Jesus as the true son of God and in doing so deliberately presents Jesus in opposition to Rome’s candidates for a suitable emperor, Savior, and Lord.” (lxxxix). See also Crossan, *God & Empire*, 104-108.

connotations.¹⁹⁵ One of the most apparent parallels to Mark’s introduction, as often pointed out, is the Priene Calendar Inscription in honour of Augustus.¹⁹⁶ It declares that Augustus’ birth is the “beginning of everything” (τῶν πάντων ἀρχῇ, line 5), and in line 40: “the birthday of the god (θεοῦ) Augustus was the beginning of (ἤρξεν) the good tidings (ἐθανγγελίων) for the world (κόσμῳ) that came by reason of him.” Augustus is sent as a “saviour” (σωτήρ, line 34), to “order all things” (κοσμήσοντα δὲ πάντα, line 36).¹⁹⁷ Craig Evans accurately concludes that:

In mimicking the language of the Imperial cult and in quoting Isa 40:3 Mark appears to have welded together two disparate, potentially antagonistic theologies. On the one hand, he proclaims to the Jewish people the fulfilment of their fondest hopes—the good news of the prophet Isaiah, while on the other hand he has boldly announced to the Roman world that the good news for the world began not with Julius Caesar and his descendants, but with Jesus Christ, the true son of God.¹⁹⁸

Between the Jewish people, and the Roman world, however, we should not assume a clear-cut division of ideas and symbols. Judaism had for centuries been negotiating with Hellenistic culture, not only in the diaspora.¹⁹⁹ Especially the urban centers in Roman Palestine, including Galilee, were to a large extent Hellenized, and inhabited by both Jews and non-Jews. Before Mark was composed, Paul had established Christian communities in Corinth and Ephesus, among other places.

Rome as an imperial project was legitimized and promoted by an ideology of peace, prosperity, and fruitful harmony, by means of appropriating local gods, ancient myths, seasonal festivals, and cults. The birth of Augustus, his reign and the splendour of Augustinian Rome is celebrated and advertised through literature, coins, sculptures, wall paintings, garden

¹⁹⁵ Leander, Hans. *Discourses of Empire: The Gospel of Mark From a Postcolonial Perspective*. University of Gothenburg, 2011. 199.

¹⁹⁶ *OGIS* 458; ca. 9 BCE.

¹⁹⁷ English translations from Evans, Craig A. ‘Mark’s incipit and the Priene calendar inscription: From Jewish gospel to Greco-Roman gospel’. *Journal of Greco-Roman Christianity and Judaism* 1.2000 (2000): 67-81.

¹⁹⁸ Evans, ‘Mark’s Incipit’, 78-79.

¹⁹⁹ David Litwa states that “In the time of Jesus himself, Palestinian Jews had so thoroughly adopted and adapted Greek ideas (including theological ones) that in many cases what appears to be a distinctly ‘Jewish’ notion is in fact a ‘Greco-Jewish’ cultural hybrid.” Litwa, M. David. *Iesus Deus: The Early Christian Depiction of Jesus as a Mediterranean God*. Augsburg Fortress Publishers, 2014. 20-21.

See also Hengel, Martin, *Judaism and Hellenism: Studies in Their Encounter in Palestine During the Early Hellenistic Period*. Fortress, 1974; Chancey, Mark A. *Greco-Roman Culture and the Galilee of Jesus*. Vol. 134. Cambridge University Press, 2005. 20; Engberg-Pedersen, Troels, ed. *Paul Beyond the Judaism/Hellenism Divide*. Westminster John Knox Press, 2001; Gerdmar, Anders. *Rethinking the Judaism-Hellenism Dichotomy: A Historiographical Case Study of Second Peter and Jude*. Almqvist & Wiksell International. 2001.

designs, etcetera. In the propaganda of the coming of the new Golden Age, the renewal and fruitfulness of nature and a harmonious rural life were major motives. Pious devotion to the gods and moral values ensured continuous peace, harmony, and abundance. As we will see, these kinds of ecological utopic visions of the Golden Age are very similar to visions of the coming messianic age in Jewish eschatological expectations. A closer presentation of the Golden Age ideology and imagery, especially in Roman pastoral literature, will be provided in my analysis of the feeding story in Mark 6.

2.6.1 Abundance and Fruitfulness

The theme of fruitfulness is particularly interesting for the present study. In the Hebrew Bible, expressions of blessings from God and the character of a good life in terms of fruit and fruit-bearing abounds. Brian Walsh and Sylvia Keesmaat observe and elaborate how the connections between fruitfulness, peace and security, justice, and righteousness from Israel's scripture, in which early Christians firmly anchored their story of Jesus, had overtones and echoes within the imperial propaganda of fruitfulness.²⁰⁰ "The Colossian community", say Walsh and Keesmaat,

was surrounded by a claim of fruitfulness and fertility, a claim rooted in the oppressive military might of the empire, in the controlling social structures of the empire, and in evocative images of lush fertility found on the buildings, statues and households items that shaped their visual imagination. It was a claim that incessantly called everyone to acknowledge that Rome was the source of fruitful abundance. In the midst of scarce resources, one could share in that abundance and partake of that fruitfulness only if one remained faithful to the empire and the structures, oppressive or not, that made the empire powerful.²⁰¹

And further:

[C]ounterimperial themes of fruitfulness and peace set in the context of Israel's covenant come to their climax in Jesus. The community that Jesus envisions not only results in fruitfulness but is itself a manifestation of the fruitfulness of Yahweh. At key points in the Gospel narratives, we meet metaphors and language of fruitfulness.²⁰²

²⁰⁰ Walsh, Brian J. and Sylvia C. Keesmaat. *Colossians Remixed: Subverting the Empire*. InterVarsity Press, 2015, 71-76.

²⁰¹ Walsh and Keesmaat, *Colossians*, 72.

²⁰² Walsh and Keesmaat, *Colossians*, 74.

The focus for Walsh and Keesmaat is the Colossian community and the rhetoric in the letter to Colossians, specifically 1:5-6; 9-10, but the theme of fruitfulness in the imperial ideology is equally relevant for the context of Mark (and likely other New Testament texts). In Mark 6, as I will argue, Jesus' miraculous feeding in the wilderness, themes of fruitful abundance, green grass, and flowering garden beds recall the fundamental Jewish belief in YHWH as creator and giver of fruitfulness, the connection between fruitfulness and justice in Deuteronomy, and the prophets' promise of restored creation/fruitfulness. These motives and symbols have interesting similarities with utopian visions in Roman pastoral poetry, in which Pan/Faunus has a significant place in such idyllic settings.

2.7 Jesus Among Gods and Divine Beings

In this section, I will map out the competitive polytheistic context of the Roman first-century by bringing together scholarship which emphasize the similarities and intersection between New Testament depictions of Jesus and pagan divine figures. This contextualization leaves a gap for a study of Pan as part of this context, hitherto overlooked, and sets the stage for the more specific contextualization of the Cult of Pan and its potential connections to Mark's Jesus, to be outlined later in this chapter. In this section, I will also address the question of how the authors of the New Testament (Mark in particular) related themselves and their Christ-belief, to the (beliefs and devotions of) other gods and divine beings.

The gods were venerated and worshiped by different peoples, for different reasons, at different times, and at different locations. "Antiquity's universe was a god-congested place", as Paula Fredriksen puts it.²⁰³ In New Testament times, modern compartmentalizing of "religion", "philosophy", and "politics" did not exist, and religious life was intertwined with the political, and affected everyday life.²⁰⁴ Several factors intersected: the level in society (state, city, association, household, private), location (gods were to a large extent related to place, according to geo-political areas – province and city patron gods – and nature geographical – gods ruling different "habitats", such as the wilderness, or the sea), life-area (gods were connected to sickness, traveling, weather, hunting, agriculture, fishing, reproduction, love, war, and so forth), and calendric time (annual

²⁰³ Fredriksen, Paula. 'Philo, Herod, Paul, and the Many Gods of Ancient Jewish 'Monotheism''. *Harvard Theological Review* 115.1 (2022): 23-45. 29.

²⁰⁴ See e.g. Oakman, Douglas E. 'Culture, Society, and Embedded Religion in Antiquity'. *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 35.1 (2005): 4-12, and Fredriksen, 'Many Gods', 25-26.

festivals and feasts related to different gods).²⁰⁵ Public religion took the form of festivals, city architecture, coins, and notably the emperor cult. Such state-motivated religious expressions were not simply propaganda, but a matter of real piety that created social identity and was still dependant on traditional popular religion.²⁰⁶ Typically, political rulers appropriated myths, local cults and deities and connected these to themselves, and to the imperial ideology.²⁰⁷ The temple raised by Herod the Great in Paneas/Caesarea Philippi to Augustus in which he was worshiped together with the city patron-god Pan, and the appropriation of this arcadian shepherd-god in foundational narratives of Rome's mythical past, are examples of this phenomenon.

In the overwhelming presence of the pagan deities in the Greco-Roman world, who controlled civic time and civic space,²⁰⁸ it should be kept in mind that *exclusive* worship and devotion to the God of Israel/Christ was a fundamental ideal in Jewish and early Christian thought, as evident in Jewish Scripture and in the New Testament. As we will see in next chapter, the criticism of idolatry and the exhortation to destroy the false gods and their cult places is an important theme especially in Deuteronomy and Deuteronomistic history and recurs throughout the Hebrew Bible. Jewish messianic expectations derived from the biblical prophets entailed the notion that τὰ ἔθνη, the pagans, would abandon their (false) gods and worship the God of Israel.²⁰⁹ This view was adopted by the authors of the New Testament who were rooted in these expectations.²¹⁰ The missionary task for the gospel writers and apostles was in one important sense to demonstrate that Christ was superior to the pagan gods. Nevertheless, conflicts concerning members in the Christ communities influenced by pagan ideas and practices are evident in several New Testament texts,²¹¹ indicating that strict boundaries against paganism were not always upheld “on the ground” in the communities.

²⁰⁵ Johnson, Luke Timothy. *Among the Gentiles: Greco-Roman Religion and Christianity*. Yale University Press, 2009. Ch. 3. Klauck *Religious Context*, Ch. 1.

²⁰⁶ Bird, Michael F. *Jesus Among the Gods: Early Christology in the Greco-Roman World*. Baylor University Press, 2022. 74-76, 397. Fox, Robin Lane. *Pagans and Christians: in the Mediterranean World from the Second Century AD to the Conversion of Constantine*. Penguin UK, 2006. 40.

²⁰⁷ Fox, *Pagans*, 40ff.

²⁰⁸ “In the early Christian periods pagan cults did not only shape civic time; they also shaped that well-worked category of ‘civic space’”, as Lane Fox puts it (*Pagans*, 72). Johnson states that “Public time and public space alike were religiously organized” (*Gentiles*, 33).

²⁰⁹ See e.g., Isa 2:2-4, 25:6; Zech 8:23; 1 En. 91:14.

²¹⁰ 1 Thess 1:9, 4:5; Gal 4:8-9; 1 Cor 8:5-6; 1 Pet 1:14. See also, Johnson, *Gentiles*, 2-9.

²¹¹ E.g., 1 Cor 5:11; 6:9; Eph. 5:5.

It is, moreover, difficult to overlook the implicit, and occasionally explicit, parallels between the stories of Jesus in the New Testament texts, and contemporary pagan traditions in the Greco-Roman world. Healing sickness, controlling weather, walking on water, providing wine, and even rising from the dead, were features of other figures in Greco-Roman tradition. In the Acts of the Apostles (14:11-13) Paul and Barnabas are confused with Zeus and Hermes by the people in Lycaonia, suggesting a comparison between the figures, by the Lycaonians, or by the author of Acts (or both). Likewise, Jesus' actions and claims as presented by Mark would also have sparked comparison with other deities and divine figures. Adela Collins suggests, for example, that Jesus' healing ministry would have called to mind traditions about the immortalized miracle worker Empedocles, or Asclepius – son of Apollo and a mortal woman – who performed various healings and even raised the dead Hero Hippolytos, according to tradition.²¹² The transfiguration of Jesus has frequently been compared to stories of (divine) epiphanies in Greek traditions.²¹³ Mark's account of the healing of the blind man (7:32-35) with the peculiar spitting action has a parallel in accounts from Tacitus, Suetonius, and Dio Cassius, of Vespasian's miraculous healing of a blind man in Alexandria, also using spittle.²¹⁴

The Markan depiction of Jesus as “Son of God/υιὸς θεοῦ”²¹⁵ recalls notably Octavian/Augustus adopted epithet “God's Son” (*divi filius*), but has several other possible connotations similar to various divine men and heroes.²¹⁶ A rivalry comparison between Christ and Heracles is evident in early Christian apologetical texts, and David Aune suggests that this comparison goes back to New Testament time. He observes a parallel between Epictetus philosophical interpretations of the demigod Heracles as “Son of God” and his obedience to the will of God, going about

²¹² Collins, Adela Yarbro, ‘Mark and his Readers: The Son of God Among Greeks and Romans’. *The Harvard Theological Review*, Vol 93, No 2 (2000): 85-100. 89.

²¹³ David Litwa argues that “Given the general cultural expectations of divine appearances in the Mediterranean world, I contend, such a story [of the transfiguration] would have indicated that Jesus was a divine being—indeed, a god clothed in human flesh.” (*Jesus Deus*, 151.)

²¹⁴ Vespasian was stationed as in Palestine to there in 69 CE to secure the grain supply to Rome. (Tacitus, *Hist.* IV.81; 83-84; Suetonius, *Vesp.* VII.2.3; Dio Cassius, LXVI.8.) See also Henrichs, Albert. ‘Vespasian's Visit to Alexandria’. *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 3 (1968): 51-80.

Eric Eve argues that “Mark introduced spittle into his story of the blind man of Bethsaida to create an allusion to the Vespasian story as part of a wider concern to contrast the messiahship of Jesus with such Roman imperial ‘messianism’”. Eve, Eric. ‘Spit in Your Eye: The Blind Man of Bethsaida and the Blind Man of Alexandria’. *New Testament Studies*, 54.1 (2008): 1-17.

²¹⁵ Explicitly or implicitly in Mk. 1:1, 1:11, 1:24, 3:11, 5:7, 9:7, 15:39.

²¹⁶ See Collins, ‘Mark and his Readers’.

“clearing away wickedness and lawlessness”²¹⁷, and the formulation in Hebrews 5:8 (“Although he was a Son, he learned obedience through what he suffered”). As these examples show, presentations of Jesus have abundant analogies in the Greco-Roman cultural encyclopaedia. This raises the question how such similarities are to be understood?

The tendency in the *Religionsgeschichtliche Schule* to explain similarities between the Christian gospels and pagan myths as syncretic influences, in an evolutionary “development” from paganism to Christianity, is today considered obsolete by most scholars. The counter movement (Martin Hengel being a representative scholar) to this was to emphasize the Jewishness of early Christianity, leading instead to a tendency to contextualize early Christology in an exclusively Jewish thought world.²¹⁸ The issue has centred around the question of how Jesus “became a god”, and in what sense, within a Jewish belief-system. The focus for our purposes is not the divinity *per se*, but rather the functions attributed to Christ in relation to functions and attributes of the god Pan.²¹⁹

This study accepts that Mark’s presentation of Jesus (as well as the other New Testament authors’) was firmly anchored in Jewish thought and based its understanding of Jesus *primarily* in Jewish Scripture and tradition(s). Judaism itself, however, was not isolated from Hellenistic culture, as we have seen. Nor can Mark’s gospel be seen as strictly an inner-Jewish discourse but instead intended for a mixed audience. The gospel itself narrates a Jesus who engages in a purposefully mission to gentiles. Mark’s audience would naturally have related the stories of Jesus to the Greco-Roman symbolic universe of various gods, divine beings, and myths, regardless of the intention of the author. From the perspective of the author, however, we should expect that we find in the text intended allusions that created “meaning-effects [...] through artful reminiscences of another text well-known to the community”, as pointed out by Hayes (see 1.5.3 above).

²¹⁷ Epictetus, *Discourses* 2.16.44–45 “how many acquaintances and friends did he have with him as he went up and down through the whole world? Nay, he had no dearer friend than God. That is why he was believed to be a son of God, and was. It was therefore in obedience to his will that he went about clearing away wickedness and lawlessness.” Quoted in Van Kooten, George H. ‘Christianity in the Graeco-Roman World: Socio-political, Philosophical, and Religious Interactions up to the Edict of Milan (ce 313) 1’. In Bingham, Dwight Jeffrey, (ed.) *The Routledge Companion to Early Christian Thought*, 3-37. Routledge, 2009. 26.

²¹⁸ Litwa, *Jesus Deus*, 10-21.

²¹⁹ To be clear, I do not see comparisons to other gods or divine figures as mutually exclusive, and the examples above do by no means exclude that Christ could have been compared also to Pan (or other figures). On the contrary, it suggests the potential fruitfulness of more studies that situate the New Testament in its Greco-Roman polytheistic context, as the old School of Religion did, although with refined methods and new insights from archaeology, sociology, and various other fields of research.

Thus, depictions of Jesus were deliberately formulated to speak to and persuade pagans and pagan Christians. “Early Christology”, says Michael F. Bird, “appears to have been resourced from within Jewish tradition and yet also intentionally *constructed to resonate* with the wider Hellenistic traditions.”²²⁰ The same point is made by David Litwa: “early Christian literature *depicted* Jesus as a deity in ways *intelligible* and *recognizable* in Greco-Roman culture”.²²¹ And: “Christians *constructed* a divine Jesus with traits specific to deities in Greco-Roman culture”.²²² Jews and Christians in this time shared many basic assumptions – cosmological, anthropological, and theological – that formed a common framework, a “set of givens shaping how the world and the gods were perceived”, says Litwa.²²³

George Van Kooten comments on the rivalry between Christ and Heracles (referred to above) and states that it illustrates “Christianity’s role as a competitor on the religio-philosophical market of the first three centuries”,²²⁴ and that Christianity in the Greco-Roman period generally “*profiled itself* as a competitor on the religio-philosophical market, confident of being able to show its distinct added value.”²²⁵ The competitive situation for Early Christianity of the second and third centuries is evident in the texts of the early apologists who confront rival pagan writers, and the pagan gods.²²⁶ A similar situation should be assumed in the first century (though perhaps not one that is equally intense).²²⁷

I propose thus that similarities are to be understood primarily in terms of religious competition, and as the concept of *oppositio in imitando* (discussed earlier) implies, Jesus was consciously depicted in ways that imitated various Greco-Roman gods and divine beings, with the purpose to show that Christ trumps these gods. It is also reasonable to assume that the Early Christian understanding of Jesus – his divinity and functions – was to some degree *shaped* and *constructed* in negotiation with the polytheistic beliefs. To what extent, however, is open for debate.

²²⁰ Bird, *Among the Gods*, 392. Italics mine.

²²¹ Litwa, *Jesus Deus*, 8. Italics mine.

²²² Litwa, *Jesus Deus*, 6.

²²³ Litwa, *Jesus Deus*, 26.

²²⁴ Van Kooten, ‘Christianity’, 25.

²²⁵ Van Kooten, ‘Christianity’, 22.

²²⁶ See e.g., Justin Martyr *First Apology*, 25; Tertullian, *Ad Nationes*, and Origen, *Contra Celsum*.

²²⁷ Van Kooten assumes a close link between “the Christianity of the second and third centuries” and “its manifestation in the first century” and regards it as “a continuum, uninterrupted by a new cultural epoch” (‘Christianity’, 5).

The religious competition in the imperial period is part of a generally competitive society and took several forms: membership in the civic elite, ranks and titles, competition between cities and their privileges, between associations, and not least between cults and deities.²²⁸ Competitors compete for the same thing and aspire to rule the same domain. Different pretenders to the messianic title, for example, have some things in common though they were sometimes quite different in their interpretation of the tradition. Different religions and worldviews compete inasmuch as they offer different ways of relating to and coping with the same fundamental issues about the meaning of life and history. The same can be said for political parties and ideologies. When the title “Messiah” was claimed for Jesus, it was made in competition with many other Messiahs, and when the early Christians labelled Jesus σωτήρ and υἱοῦ θεοῦ, they claimed for him a space already occupied by someone else (e.g., the Caesar). Which other divine beings or gods Jesus might have been profiled against, would have been dependent on which function or aspect of Jesus is presented by Mark (or other New Testament authors) in a particular instance.

The polytheistic context of Mark outlined so far can be applied on the cult of Pan, the focus of my study. A comparison between Christ and Pan puts certain aspects in focus and can elucidate the implicit Christology in Mark. We have seen how a competition between Jesus and other divine figures can be understood as *mimicking*, working through the logic of *oppositio in imitando*. Applied to Pan, Jesus is presented as having similar functions and attributes as Pan, but superior to the goat-god in those respects. In reception history, Pan is compared to Christ in their significance as notably shepherd-gods and god of “All” (nature), while Pan has simultaneously been interpreted as Satan or (the) demon – the antagonist to Christ. In chapter 5, I will explore depictions of demonic/satanic beings in Jewish traditions (and related Greek traditions) and show how the trajectory of Pan-as-demon/Satan could have developed earlier and independent of Eusebius’ employment of the motif. I will also suggest possible allusions to Pan in Mark’s depictions of Satan and the demons, paying attention to geographic details, and features of the demoniacs. I assume that Mark’s audience recognised such geographical signals in the text and related them to the geo-political and geo-theological aspects of the specific places. In

²²⁸ Chaniotis, Angelos. ‘Megatheism: The Search for the Almighty God and the Competition of Cults’. In Mitchell, Stephen and Peter Van Nuffelen (Eds.) *One God: Pagan Monotheism in the Roman Empire*, 112-140. Cambridge University Press, 2010.

next section, I will give but a brief presentation of the historical context of the general notions of demons in Mark and his surrounding culture.

2.8 Satan and Demons in Mark

In the cultural world of Mark, belief in demons was widely shared, and used in general as a concept to understand the relation between the human and divine spheres.²²⁹ Anders Klostergaard Petersen describes the functions of demons in the ancient world as complex:

The demon has been held to act as a human representative in the divine world and as a divine agent in the world of men. It has been used to represent an evil element in a world basically held to be good. And it has been used to embody the good element in a world held to be evil.²³⁰

Thus, demons could refer to spirits of dead persons, or to the spiritual power employed by the gods to enforce a blessing or curse in the human realm, according to divine law, and depending on one's piety or fate.²³¹ They could cause natural disasters such as hailstorms, plagues, and pests. A person who was under the power of a demon (δεμονάω, δεμονίζομαι) could fall prey to bodily illness or insanity, but this state could also convey good fortune, prophetic power, and prosperity. In its plain original meaning, δαίμων and the related term δαιμόνιον denote an individual god (Olympians or lesser deities) or an unspecified divinity, or the power of the god.²³² In other words, a demon can be said to be a god's means of interaction in the human sphere, for good as well as for bad.

In Early Christianity, however, demons are consistently evil, and in Mark as well, δαιμόνιον and πνεῦμα τὸ ἀκάθαρτον (used interchangeably) clearly have a negative meaning. Jesus' ministry (up to Mark chapter 9) entails to a significant degree to cast out (ἐκβάλλειν) these spiritual entities. The exorcism in Mark is strongly related to Jesus' authority and power (ἐξουσία), and the coming of the kingdom of God. In opposition to Jesus and the βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ, stands also Satan, who seems to belong to the realm of the demons in Mark. He is (most likely) to be identified

²²⁹ Nienke Vos and Willemien Otten, (eds.) *Demons and the Devil in Ancient and Medieval Christianity*. Brill, 2011. 5-6. DDD, 'Demon'; ABD, 'Demons'.

²³⁰ Klostergaard Petersen, Anders. 'The Notion of Demon: Open Questions to a Diffuse Concept', in A.A. Lange and H. Lichtenberger (eds). *Die Dämonen: die Dämonologie der israelitisch-jüdischen und frühchristlichen Literatur im Kontext ihrer Umwelt*, 23-41. Tübingen, Mohr Siebeck, 2003. quoted in Vos and Otten, Demons, 6.

²³¹ DDD, 'Demon'.

²³² DDD, 'Demon'.

with Beelzebub, the leader of the demons (ἄρχοντι τῶν δαιμονίων) in Mk 3:22-27, ruling an opposing kingdom.²³³

While Christian interpretation and theology (or satanology) has tended to simplify the (rather pluriform) functions of Satan in the New Testament to a monolithic and coherent concept of Satan,²³⁴ recent research on “satanology” in the New Testament has moved towards a more nuanced view acknowledging a broad variety of satanologies, with a broad variety of influences. For our purpose of exploring a possible Pan-as-demon/Satan motif in Mark, we need to take into consideration the complex tradition of notions about Satan, demons, and various spiritual figures in the Hebrew Bible and later Jewish texts,²³⁵ and the Greco-Roman context contemporary to Mark. If we consider the rather complex history of the various imageries and concepts behind the demonic and satanic beings in the New Testament, it is necessary to pay closer attention to the details and variety of functions and allusions implied in the figure of Satan and demons, and what they represent theologically in the texts. The author of Mark does not provide any explanation to the origin or the relationships between the superhuman beings in his gospel. We might, however, find clues to more specific notions about Satan and demons implied in the details of the narratives.

I will now present more specifically the historical context of (the cult of) Pan and show how it can be related to Mark’s depictions of Jesus. We start by exploring his role in imperial ideology and move then to the geographical location of Paneas/Caesarea Philippi, and beyond.

2.9 Pan and Empire

There are indications that Pan had a special significance for the Julio-Claudian dynasty. According to Suetonius, Augustus restored the ancient festival Lupercalia, held in honour of Pan at the Palatine hill, on February 15.²³⁶ Marcus Antonius, Augustus’ brother-in-law was a *Lupercus*, a priest

²³³ Collins, *Mark*, 231-232; Van Oyen, Geert. ‘Demons and Exorcisms in the Gospel of Mark.’ In Vos and Otten (Eds.) *Demons and the Devil in Ancient and Medieval Christianity*, 97-116. Brill, 2011. 110-111; France, *Mark*, 170; Stokes, Ryan E. *The Satan: How God’s Executioner Became the Enemy*. Eerdmans Publishing, 2019. 197. For an opposing (minority) view, See Kelly, Henry Ansgar. *Satan: A Biography*. Cambridge University Press, 2006. 82-83.

²³⁴ See e.g., de Bruin, Tom. ‘In Defence of New Testament Satanologies: A Response to Farrar and Williams’. *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 44.3 (2022): 435-451.

²³⁵ For a recent overview, see Stokes, *The Satan*.

²³⁶ Wiseman, Timothy Peter. ‘The God of the Lupercal’. *The Journal of Roman Studies* 85 (1995): 1-22. 15. Wiseman argues convincingly that the honoured god of this festival was in fact Pan (and not Faunus, or any other).

of Pan.²³⁷ In addition, we have already seen that according to the text of Plutarch, Tiberius had a special interest in the strange report of the death of Pan. The historicity of Plutarch's story is debated. According to Borgeaud, however, Plutarch's report is considered partly authentic, and reflects a rumor of Pan's death during the time of Tiberius.²³⁸ Tiberius' interest in Pan and his assumed death is, according to Borgeaud, best fitted in the "climate of a period of imperial history marked by frequency of signs and portents, as well as by the consequence in the Roman Empire of movements of the Messianic-revolutionary sort."²³⁹ While historical connections between the alleged death of Pan, and the death of Jesus, based on Plutarch's text is uncertain, Tiberius' interest in Pan, however, can be established from other sources.²⁴⁰

Borgeaud points out that Pan had long held a place in astrology in the form of the constellation Capricorn – the birth sign of Augustus.²⁴¹ The emperor



Ill. 3. Silver mint from Ephesus. Augustus (obverse) and Capricorn with cornucopia (reverse). Struck circa 25-20 BCE.

Image source: Wikimedia Commons. Licence number CC BY-SA 2.5. Author username Carlomorino. (https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Augustus_Cistophorus_Ephesus_91000860.jpg)

²³⁷ Cic. *Phil.* 2.34

²³⁸ Borgeaud, 'Death', 258.

²³⁹ Borgeaud, 'Death', 260.

²⁴⁰ The report of Pan's death in Plutarch, and its potential relation to the death of Jesus are further elaborated and discussed in Appendix.

²⁴¹ On Pan's connections with the Capricorn, see Borgeaud, *Cult of Pan*, 100; 214 note 154. According to Sharon Coggan, "It is Pan's connection to the realm of hunting that lent him his curious sea associations. Pan gained the title *haliplangtos* 'sea-roaming'. And he is seen in the Hellenistic astrological context where he lent his image to the model for the Capricorn motif, a goat with the lower body of a fish. This comes from his status as hunter since hunters often expand their activities to fishing in the attempt to provide enough food. Hunting, herding, and fishing merge together as different modalities in a general way of life in a world of

had this sign engraved on seal rings, coins (with his own portrait on the obverse, see illustration 3), gems, reliefs, and the like. The sign had also been made the emblem of Augustus' *Legio II Augusta*, displayed on shields, helmets, standards, finger rings, etcetera.²⁴² Several other legions used the Capricorn as emblem: *IIII Macedonica*, *IIII Schytica*, *XIIII Gemina*, *XXI Rapax*, and the *XXII Primigenia* (founded by Caligula or Claudius), linking the date or circumstances of their foundation with Augustus.²⁴³ The Capricorn continued to be a symbol of Augustus as founder of the Empire, and was subsequently appropriated also by the Flavian Emperors, to connect themselves to the Julio-Claudian dynasty: Vespasian and Domitian began their rule, and Titus was born when the sun was in Capricorn. So was Galba, who also formed the legion *I Adiutrix* in 68 CE. with the Capricorn as emblem,²⁴⁴ and later, Hadrian also used the symbol to recall the first emperor.²⁴⁵ The symbol is featured notably on the famous *Gemma Augustea*, where the "sign of the Capricorn and the Eagle of Jupiter frame the figuration of Augustus".²⁴⁶ Suetonius wrote about Augustus that "he had such a great faith in his own destiny that he made public his horoscope and later minted a silver coin with the Zodiac sign Capricorn, under which he was born."²⁴⁷ The constellation of Capricorn was linked in calendric time to the rebirth of the sun after the winter solstice (the time of Augustus' conception, and the time of the inauguration of his principate) and symbolically to the beginning of the new era of light after darkness, order after chaos, and peace after war. This was visualized at the Field of Mars (*Campus Martius*) in Rome according to reconstructions of the solarium (*Horologium Augusti*), in which the altar of peace (*Ara Pacis*) was integrated.²⁴⁸ On some coins from Augustus, the Capricorn is holding the globe (illustration 4),²⁴⁹ a motif also found on the obverse on coins from Tiberius.²⁵⁰

forest, pasture, and stream." Coggan, Sharon L. *Sacred Disobedience: A Jungian Analysis of the Saga of Pan and the Devil*, Lexington Books, 2020. 45.

²⁴² Keppie, Lawrence. 'The Origins and Early History of the Second Augustan Legion', in Brewer, R. J., (ed.), *Birthday of the Eagle: The Second Augustan Legion and the Roman Military Machine*. National Museum Wales, 2002. 13.

²⁴³ Keppie, 'Origins', 14.

²⁴⁴ Keppie, 'Origins', 14.

²⁴⁵ Barton, Tamsyn. 'Augustus and Capricorn: Astrological Polyvalency and Imperial Rhetoric.' *The Journal of Roman Studies* 85 (1995): 33-51. 44-46; González-García, A. César, et al. 'The Winter Solstice as a Roman Cultural Fingerprint from the Mythical Origins of Rome to Augustus'. *Environmental Archaeology* (2022): 1-10.

²⁴⁶ Borgeaud, 'Death', 263, n. 31.

²⁴⁷ Suetonius *The Life of Augustus*, 94.12. (Translation LCL.)

²⁴⁸ For details, see Barton, 'Augustus and Capricorn', 47; González-García et al., 'Winter Solstice'.

²⁴⁹ See OCRE Online: [http://numismatics.org/ocre/id/rie.1\(2\).aug.126](http://numismatics.org/ocre/id/rie.1(2).aug.126). Accessed 230424.

²⁵⁰ Barton, 'Augustus and Capricorn', 36, 47, 49.

Scholars of imperial ideology interpret the Capricorn with the globe as an allusion to the cosmic rulership of Pan, and simultaneously in Augustan imperial propaganda, Augustus' dominion over land and sea, as the



Ill. 4. Silver mint from Spain. Augustus (obverse) and Capricorn holding the globe with Cornucopia above (reverse). Struck circa 18-16 BCE.

Capricorn is a half marine and half terrestrial being. The symbol appears on Augustan coins, mainly after the sea battle of Actium in 31 BCE and the conquest of Egypt, sometimes together with the Egyptian crocodile representing the *Aegypto Capta*.²⁵¹

Moreover, in the Latin adaptation of Aratos' *Phainomena*, attributed to Tiberius but written by Germanicus, his nephew and adopted son, Augustus is (after his death) praised by the poet:

This sign, Augustus, thanks to his body which engendered you,
brought to the sky your divine soul, before the eyes of the amazed
peoples and the frightened country, and returned it to the mother
stars.

Hic, Auguste, tuum genitali corpore numen attonitas inter gentes
patriamque paventem in caelum tulit et maternis reddidit astris.
(*Aratea*, lines 558-560)²⁵²

²⁵¹ Barton, 'Augustus and Capricorn', 47-51. See also Zanker, Paul. *The Power of Images in the Age of Augustus*. The University of Michigan Press, 1988. 48-49, 84.

²⁵² Translation from Barton, 'Augustus and Capricorn', 36. On the authorship of this poem, see Baldwin, Barry. 'The Authorship of the 'Aratus' Ascribed to Germanicus'. *Quaderni Urbinati di Cultura Classica* 7 (1981): 163-172.

According to several interpreters, the sign to which Augustus' *numen* ascends, is Capricorn.²⁵³ According to Borgeaud, the sign Capricorn is presented in this poem in the framework of Alexandrian mythology but reinterpreted in terms of Augustan ideology, and that the lines quoted above presents "[t]he death of Augustus, who rises toward the heavenly spheres, borne up by Pan [and] creates on earth a kind of fearful panic which threatens the order and equilibrium of the Roman Empire."²⁵⁴

The poem shows, according to Elżbieta Włodarczyk,

the divinity of Augustus' soul, and points out his origins, suggesting that he had come down from the stars to the Earth and after death was brought back where he belonged. This also is a trace of Augustus' constant and systematic path to divinity, which begun with announcing his "father", Julius Caesar, a god.²⁵⁵

Tamsyn Barton makes a similar point:

Here the words *genetali* and *maternis* make it clear that in this translation to the stars Augustus is carried back to the constellation from which he came.²⁵⁶

In other words, Augustus underwent an *apotheosis* – a deification – through the proses of ascending to heaven and being transformed to the star constellation of Capricorn. This supports Borgeaud's interpretation of imperial ideology, and his conclusion is that it is in this context that the Tiberian interest of the rumor of the death of Pan is fitting.²⁵⁷ Tiberius was, according to Borgeaud, "particularly inclined to the practice of astrology".²⁵⁸ Borgeaud reasons that in the mind of Tiberius, the rumor signaled a prodigy or portent of the "imminence of a danger that would threaten the power he had inherited from Augustus".²⁵⁹ Astrology and astrologers, stellar constellations, and calendric time had a very strong

²⁵³ Włodarczyk, Elżbieta. 'Politics and the Stars Elements of Augustan Ideology in Germanicus' 'Aratea'. *Scripta Classica* 6 (2009): 99-110. 109; Barton, 'Augustus and Capricorn', 36; Borgeaud, 'Death', 264-265.

²⁵⁴ Borgeaud, 'Death', 264.

²⁵⁵ Włodarczyk, 'Politics', 109.

²⁵⁶ Barton, 'Augustus and Capricorn', 36.

²⁵⁷ Borgeaud, 'Death', 265.

²⁵⁸ Borgeaud, 'Death', 262-263.

²⁵⁹ Borgeaud, 'Death', 265.



Ill. 5. *Amethyst intaglio. Cabinet des Médailles, Paris.*

significance for cultic and agricultural activities as well as politics, as noted earlier.

Additional intriguing indications of Tiberius' interest in Pan is suggested by Edward Champlin. Besides the uncertain report from the sixth-century historian John Malalas (referring to a certain "learned chronicler" Domninus) that Tiberius built a temple of Pan in Syrian Antioch,²⁶⁰ Champlin presents substantial evidence that connects Tiberius to Pan. Firstly, a surviving ring stone, an amethyst intaglio, signed with the name of the gem cutter Epitychanos of the Augustan age, clearly depicts a portrait of a member of the Julio-Claudian house, and a contemporary with Germanicus, according to Champlin. The portrait has the typical Julio-Claudian hairstyle, but the sideburn of the young man is extended and bewildered, his ear is triangular and pointed, and two small horns points

²⁶⁰ Champlin, Edward. 'Tiberius & Pan', in Michaela Fuchs (Ed.) *Ahoros: Gedenkschrift für Hugo Meyer von Weggefährten, Kollegen und Freunden*. Jacobek, Roman, Mag, 2018. 160. Borgeaud is less doubtful: "[Tiberius], we know, had a sanctuary built for this god [Pan] behind the theater of Antioch", referring to Domninus cited by Malalas. ('Death', 262.)

out from his forehead (illustration 5). According to Champlin, “He is a Caesar portrayed as the god Pan, and he must be Tiberius.”²⁶¹ Secondly, several artworks found at Tiberius’ Villa Iovis on Capri (to where he retreated the eleven last years of his rule), features depictions of Pan. On a high-quality marble relief discovered at the Villa Iovis and dated to the era of Augustus and Tiberius, Pan is in the center of a bucolic scene, mounted on a donkey with “an enormous phallus”²⁶² (illustration 6). Suetonius gives accounts of Tiberius’ sexual perversities at his residence on Capri and describes bedrooms decorated with wall paintings and statues with lavish and explicit sexual scenes, and “teams of wantons of both sexes, selected as experts in deviant intercourse [...] to excite his flagging passions” or in Champlin’s words “a voyeur’s paradise”.²⁶³ Outside, in the natural environment of Tiberius’ villas, with caves and cliffs (famous as the haunts of Pan), the Emperor had, according to Suetonius, “arranged for many



Ill. 6. Relief of Pan riding an ithyphallic mule. Naples Archaeological Museum, Italy.

²⁶¹ Champlin, ‘Tiberius & Pan’, 157.

²⁶² Champlin, ‘Tiberius & Pan’, 161.

²⁶³ Suetonius, *The Life of Tiberius*, 43.1-2. (Translation LCL). Champlin, ‘Tiberius & Pan’, 160.

places devoted to sex in the woods and grooves everywhere, and for boys and girls in the guise of Little Pans (*Panisci*) and Nymphs, offering themselves throughout the caves and hollow rocks. These caves and grottos are now openly and commonly called the Place of the Goat (*Caprineum*), playing on the name of the island.”²⁶⁴

Thirdly, Champlin presents another ring stone (illustration 7) found in Augsburg, Germany, in 1990 and dated to the last third of the first century BCE, depicting the Capricorn “galloping” on the waves, mounted by a nude young man with snub nose, pointed ears, and horns that “identify him without a doubt as Pan”, according to Champlin.²⁶⁵



Ill. 7. Carnelian cameo, Augsburg, Römisches Museum.

Thus, the Capricorn symbol represented in calendric time the rebirth of the sun, and symbolically the rebirth of the Golden Age, dominion over both land and sea (reflected by the dual nature of the Capricorn as both maritime and terrestrial, together with the globe), good fortune, peace, saving of citizens lives, and fertility and abundance of the Empire.²⁶⁶ In other words, the Capricorn was made the symbol and guarantor of the promises of the

²⁶⁴ Quotation from Champlin, 'Tiberius & Pan', 160.

²⁶⁵ Champlin, 'Tiberius & Pan', 162.

²⁶⁶ Barton, 'Augustus and Capricorn', 47, 49.

Golden Age, and became a key symbol of imperial propaganda, a badge or “logo” for the rule of Augustus and subsequent emperors, ubiquitously displayed on coins, public art, military standards, among other things.

The connection between Pan and the Capricorn is clear enough, but since the Capricorn had multivalent symbolic meanings, sometimes rather creatively constructed to support and fit the imperial propaganda, we cannot take for granted that associations with Pan were immediate. However, as we will see (3.5.7), Pan also appears repeatedly in Roman pastoral literature to connect Rome’s mytho-historical origin to ancient Greek myths and symbols, and he was indeed a very popular figure in Roman bucolic motives and art. Moreover, Barton points out that Nigidius Figulus – a renowned scholar and friend of Cicero – clearly associates the Capricorn with Pan’s role in saving the world from the tyranny of Typhon, and restoring the rule of the gods, a parallel to the victory of Actium and the era to come with Octavian/Augustus.²⁶⁷

In the case of Tiberius, a more personal fixation with Pan seems to be the case, evident from the personification of the emperor with the goat-god. Suetonius’ reports of Tiberius’ sexual extravagances in the caves of Capri which are according to Suetonius, “now openly and commonly called the place of the Goat, playing on the name of the island [i.e., Capri]”, probably reflect the legacy of Tiberius in public opinion. Tiberius’ identification with Pan, Champlin suggests, “is an intensely private obsession, reflective of Tiberius’ complex personality and eccentric interests”.²⁶⁸

Champlin also suggests another reason for Tiberius’ identification with Pan: he was entranced by, and mimicked the Macedonian general Antigones Gonatas, who also depicted himself as Pan.²⁶⁹ Interestingly, archaeological, and textual evidence shows that Alexander, and subsequent Macedonian rulers were depicted as Pan. A marble statuette found in 2009 in Pella (the birthplace of Alexander) in Macedonia dated to late 4th – early 3rd century BCE, represents Alexander the Great with small horns, pointed ears and a tail.²⁷⁰ Pliny the Elder, in his *Natural History*, presents a list of “Artists that painted with pencil” (Book 35) and reported that the famous painter Zeuxis composed a picture of Pan on a request from Archelaus I, the king of Macedonia (413-399 BCE). Moreover, Pliny reports that Aristotle advised the painter Protogenes to

²⁶⁷ Barton, ‘Augustus and Capricorn’, 47.

²⁶⁸ Champlin, ‘Tiberius & Pan’, 163.

²⁶⁹ Champlin, ‘Tiberius & Pan’, 163.

²⁷⁰ Pella Archaeological Museum. Inv. No. ΓΑ 143.

paint a portrait of Alexander, and seemingly decided to paint him together with Pan (or in the shape of Pan):

It was this philosopher [Aristotle] too, who advised him to paint the exploits of Alexander the Great, as being certain to be held in everlasting remembrance. The impulse, however, of his natural disposition, combined with a certain artistic caprice, led him in preference to adopt the various subjects which have just been mentioned. His last works were representations of Alexander and the god Pan. (*Natural History*, 35.36)

“In Macedonia”, Borgeaud says,

Pan enjoyed the particular favor of the ruling circles from the end of the fifth century on, and from the time of the expedition of Alexander, the new Dionysus, his membership in the thiasos was particularly stressed: Pan, leading a whole company of Pans, joins the god in his campaign against the Indies.²⁷¹

Several other pieces of evidence point to a strong popularity of Pan in Macedonia. Pan is depicted on Macedonian coins in the name of Antigonos Gonatas (ruled c. 277-239 B.C.). The series of coins continued to be produced during the Antigonid dynasty until the end of Antigonos III Doson (221 B.C.).²⁷² Throughout this period, the Antigonid coins depict, notably, Pan’s head on a Macedonian shield, and with Pan next to a battleship, both to “commemorate two victories, one by land and one by sea, marked with Pan’s seal.”²⁷³ Antigonos also commissioned the poet Aratos of Soli to write hymns to Pan (for ritual use), and he instituted the *Paneia* festival at Delos around 246 B.C. “This rite evidently was the culmination of a long connection between this king and the god”, according to Borgeaud.²⁷⁴ Pan’s auxiliary function in wars, particularly Pan’s assistance to the Greeks in the war against Persia at Marathon, and the Celtic attack at Delphi in 279 B.C. is likely part of the reason for Pan’s popularity among the Macedonian rulers, although it was not limited to the field of war, as Borgeaud contends.²⁷⁵ The appropriation of Pan for the

²⁷¹ Borgeaud, *Cult of Pan*, 112. Pan became part of Dionysus’ thiasos (i.e., a group of worshippers of a god). See also, Laubscher, Hans Peter. ‘Hellenistische Herrscher und Pan’, *MDAI(A)*100, (1985): 333-353.

²⁷² Panagopoulou, Ekaterini. *Antigonos Gonatas: Coinage, Money and the Economy*. (PhD Dissertation) University of London, 2000.

²⁷³ Borgeaud, *Cult of Pan*, 112 note 138. “To put an image of Pan on a helmet or shield”, says Borgeaud, “implies that one is asking the help in war of a power that induces fear but in itself is not proper to battle.” (*Cult of Pan*, 91 note 24.)

²⁷⁴ Borgeaud, *Cult of Pan*, 112 note 138.

²⁷⁵ Borgeaud, *Cult of Pan*, 112 note 138; Panagopoulou, *Antigonos*, 88-89. On Pan’s role as intervener in wars, see also Gartzou-Tatti, Ariadne. ‘Gods, Heroes, and the Battle of Marathon’. *Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies*. Supplement (2013): 91-110, 98-101, and Borgeaud, *Cult of Pan*, 89-91; 94-97.

Macedonians served ideological and religious purposes, to confirm Greek identity in the power balance between the Antigonids, the Ptolemies, and the Central Greeks (who all worshiped Pan), according to Panagopoulou.²⁷⁶

The appropriation of Pan in different respects by the Roman emperors can be understood in light of the history of Pan's status among Hellenistic rulers. Considering the considerable impact of Alexander the Great and his legacy on Roman culture in general and particularly as a dynastic model for Roman emperors,²⁷⁷ it is perhaps more likely that Alexander the Great – who, before Gonatas, was represented as Pan – was the role model for both Gonatas and Tiberius.

We can conclude that we have compelling indications that there were, in fact, connections between Pan and the Roman Empire and emperors, particularly Tiberius and to some extent Augustus. Pan, especially in the form of the Capricorn, was used as an important symbol in imperial propaganda, and thus, potentially represented both a religious and political antagonist to Christ when Christianity spread in the Roman Empire.²⁷⁸ In Palestine, Herod the Great built a temple to Pan and Augustus in front of the Cave of Pan in Ceasarea Philippi, one of the major cult places of Pan. We therefor now turn to the land where Pan and Jesus met.

2.10 Pan in Roman Palestine

2.10.1 Paneas – The City of Pan

Caesarea Philippi was founded by Philip the Tetrarch in approximately 2 BCE.²⁷⁹ Before Philip the Tetrarch renamed it after himself, and in honour of Augustus, its Greek name was Panias (with the spelling variations Paneas/Paneias) the feminine form of πάνειον, the grotto of Pan. The name Caesarea Panias was established in the second and third centuries, but from the fourth, simply Panias was used. Baniyas, the Arabic name, survives to this day. The city centre was situated about 300 m southwest from the

²⁷⁶ Panagopoulou, *Antigonos*, 81-89.

²⁷⁷ See e.g., Spencer, Diana. *The Roman Alexander: Reading A Cultural Myth*. University of Exeter Press, 2002; Peltonen, Jaakkojuhani. *Alexander the Great in the Roman Empire, 150 BC to AD 600*. Routledge, 2019.

²⁷⁸ Interestingly, it has been argued that the “mark of the beast” (Rev 16:2; 19:20) was the Capricorn symbol. See May, David M. ‘The Empire Strikes Back: The Mark of the Beast in Revelation’. *Review & Expositor* 106.1 (2009): 83-98.

²⁷⁹ Ma'oz, Zvi. ‘Baniyas’ in Sh'tern, Efraim (Ed.), *The New Encyclopedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land*. 1. Simon & Schuster, 1993. 136.



Ill. 7. Aerial photo of the cave of Pan, Banias, October 2015.

Image source: Wikimedia Commons. Licence number CC BY-SA 4.0. Author username AVRAMGR. (https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:BANIAS_AERIAL.jpg)

Sanctuary of Pan (also called Paneion), at the foot of Mount Hermon that dominated the landscape to the north, with its impressive height of more than 2 800 meters above sea level.²⁸⁰ Melting water and rain running down from Hermon via underground cavities, literally gushing out from the rock, provided the city with fresh water. As the main source of the Jordan River, it was the source of the perceived fertility of the Jordan valley and areas around the Sea of Galilee. The importance of Hermon as a source of water is recognized by both Pliny and Tacitus.²⁸¹ Josephus describes the beauty and bounty of the area of the Sea of Galilee, provided with water “perfectly pure”, with its “apparent source at Paneion”.²⁸²

²⁸⁰ Ma’oz, ‘Banias’, 136-137.

²⁸¹ *Nat. Hist.* V. 16; *Histories*, V. 6.

²⁸² *JW* III, 506-510. Josephus points out, somewhat curious, that contrary to common knowledge, the real source is another pool. He derives this “fact” from a “test” made by tetrarch Philip, to prove that the water source of Caesarea Philippi was not the pool/cave of Pan. A plausible explanation of this (likely false) claim is suggested by Freyne; it might have been a way to “convince the natives...because of their reluctance to tamper with the water issuing from this sacred spring with its healing properties”. See Freyne, *A Jewish Galilean*, 57.

The natural beauty of the springs of Banias,²⁸³ the abundance of gushing water swirling through the lush verdure, make the area a fitting sanctuary of a deity of nature and fecundity. The fact that it featured Mount Hermon's "snowy crest and the mountain peaks", as in the Homeric hymn to Pan, as well as a huge natural grotto, made this location an obvious haven for Pan, and a natural place for Pan worship.²⁸⁴

With its astonishing natural beauty, the cold crystal water spring, and the clouded mountain peaks as a majestic backdrop, this site was an obvious "sacred place", and had been so for a considerable time.²⁸⁵ The introduction of Pan worship to Banias can be traced back to at least 198 BCE based on the Greek historian Polybius, who recounts the victory of Antiochus III over the Ptolemaic general Scopas at the Paneion.²⁸⁶ This victory might in fact be the historical event that triggered the establishment of Pan worship at this site. Polybius reports of a "confusion" among the Ptolemaic army, that might have been interpreted by the Seleucids as a divine intervention of Pan, who was famous for intervening in battles by causing fear, panic, and confusion among the enemies, notably in Herodotus account of the battle of Marathon.²⁸⁷ After the victory of the Athenians, Pan was honoured with a sanctuary at the slope of the Acropolis.²⁸⁸ While this suggestion is hard to derive directly from Polybius' history, it is likely that the Athenians' victory in the battle of Marathon figured as an encouraging role model for the Hellenistic Seleucids, and that the legend of Philippiades encounter with Pan and the subsequent cult in Athens inspired the establishment of a cult to Pan at this location.

²⁸³ See front cover for a snapshot of Banias spring in present time.

²⁸⁴ Wilson, *Caesarea*, 3-4. On Pan's association with grottos, see Bourgeaud, *The Cult of Pan*, Ch. 3. The grotto measures about 26 to 30 meters in width and 17 meters in height. (Ma'oz, 'Banias', 140.)

²⁸⁵ Andrew Davis states that "Indeed the region around Mount Hermon was regarded in antiquity as a veritable Utopia, according to the Hebrew Bible (e.g., Judg 18:7-10) as well as numerous ancient Near Eastern mythological texts". Davis, Andrew R. *Tel Dan in its Northern Cultic Context*. Society of Biblical Literature, 2013. 7.

²⁸⁶ Polybius, *Hist.* 16.18.2.

²⁸⁷ This interpretation of the victory of the Seleucids as the historical event behind the cult of Pan at Paneion is suggested by Tzaferis, see Tzaferis, Vassilios. 'The 'God who is in Dan' and the Cult-of Pan at Banias in the Hellenistic and Roman Periods'. *Eretz-Israel* 23 (1992): 128-135, 133.

²⁸⁸ Herodotus reports that "Pan called out Philippiades' name and bade him ask the Athenians why they paid him no attention, though he was of goodwill to the Athenians, had often been of service to them, and would be in the future. The Athenians believed that these things were true, and when they became prosperous, they established a sacred precinct of Pan beneath the Acropolis. Ever since that message they propitiate him with annual sacrifices and a torch-race." The cave of Pan at Acropolis was rediscovered in 1896-97, together with votive offerings depicting Pan and deities associated with the god. (Wilson, *Caesarea Philippi*, 58.) Herodotus *Hist.* 6.105.2-3 (Translation LCL). The story is retold by Pausanias (2nd century CE). See Pausanias *Description of Greece* 1.28.4; 8.54.6.

Polybius' reference to the place of the battle as "Paneion" might however indicate an already established cult site to Pan, going back to Ptolemaic times (third century BCE).²⁸⁹ In Ptolemaic Egypt, we have further examples of the Greek god Pan incorporating Egyptian deities, e.g. Osiris, as recorded by Eusebius, who also mentions the city *Panopolis*, named after Pan.²⁹⁰ In Alexandria, Pan was part of the dynastic cult of Dionysos and was identified with the god Min (a central deity of fertility, son of Osiris and Isis).²⁹¹ Strabo describes a *Paneion* constructed in the city, as a "man made hill [with] the shape of a fir-cone, resembles a rocky hill, and is ascended by a spiral road; and from the summit one can see the whole of the city lying below it on all sides."²⁹² The *paneion* in Alexandria was probably constructed by Ptolemy II.²⁹³

In c. 19 BCE, Herod the Great erected a white marble temple to Augustus near the *Paneion* in Paneas/Caesarea Philippi.²⁹⁴ Having already built an impressive Augusteum in Sebaste/Samaria (a town with a royal past in Israelite history), and with a second temple to the Emperor in Caesarea Maritima under construction, a third one in the north would frame Herod's kingdom with imperial presence and emphasise Roman rule. A temple dedicated to Augustus in the former territory of Zenodorus, was a suitable gesture in return for Augustus granting this territory to Herod.²⁹⁵ To place the temple at a rural cult-site to a Greek god, where no city or settlements had yet been established might require some explanation. That Zenodorus' former territory lacked urban centres made an urban location impossible here, but then why build at the *Paneion*?

Andrea Berlin provides important clues to answer this:

²⁸⁹ Berlin, Andrea M. 'The Archaeology of Ritual: The Sanctuary of Pan at Baniyas/Caesarea Philippi'. *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 315.1 (1999): 27-45. 30. Ma'oz, 'Baniyas', 137.

²⁹⁰ "Osiris, too, some think to be Apis, and some Dionysus, some Pluto, some Ammon, some Zeus, and others Pan." Eusebius, *Praep.* 2.1.13. (Translation *LCL*). "In the expedition with Osiris there went his two sons, Anubis and Macedon; and he took with him also Pan, who is especially honoured by the Egyptians, and from whom Panopolis is named." (2.1.5). The quotes are almost verbatim from Diodorus of Sicily, *Bibliotheca Historica*, 1.18 and 1.20.

²⁹¹ Ma'oz, 'Baniyas', 137.

²⁹² Strabo, *Geog.* 17.1.10. (Translation *LCL*). Pan is, with few exceptions worshiped outside cities, often in natural and beautiful sites, caves and springs, as in Paneas. To set up a *Paneion* in the city would require a fitting arrangement, and thus, a rocky hill in the shape of a conifer cone (Fir and Pine being the sacred trees of Pan) is a somewhat brilliant way to get Pan in to the city. The Pan Cave in Athens is another prime example of a Pan shrine in a city, but still located in a fitting environment, on the slope of the Acropolis hill. The identification of Mendes and Pan is reported in Herodotus, *Hist.* 2.46. "In the Egyptian language Mendes is the name both for the he-goat and for Pan." Strabo reports that Pan is worshipped in the city of Mendes (*Geog.* 17.1.19).

²⁹³ Panagopoulou, *Antigonos*, 88 note 49.

²⁹⁴ *JW* I, 404; *JA* XV, 363. Ma'oz, 'Baniyas', 140.

²⁹⁵ Berlin, 'Augusteum', 5, 11.

[T]he setting is sublime: a vast cavern in the face of a towering mountain, with a continuous gush of water below. Such a place will provide the proper measure of magnificence. A second benefit, this one quite delightful, is that the cult here was founded by the Ptolemies, the family of Cleopatra. So here too is a charged past, an aura of power, history, and ultimate victory – all to accentuate the new temple.²⁹⁶

That Pan played an important role in the Ptolemaic and likely also in Seleucid ruler cult,²⁹⁷ and the historical association of Paneas with military victory, would provide motivation why Herod the Great found this site to be fitting for a temple that would honour Augustus. In addition, the layout of the cave of Pan at the *Paneion*, resembles the physical setting of the *Lykaion* at the Palatine hill in Rome where Pan had been worshiped by Greek settlers before Rome was founded, as described by Dionysius of Halicarnassus (1st century BCE):

As for the Arcadians, when they had joined in a single settlement at the foot of the hill, they proceeded to adorn their town with all the buildings to which they had been accustomed at home and to erect temples. And first they built a temple to the Lycaean Pan by the direction of Themis (for to the Arcadians Pan is the most ancient and the most honoured of all the gods), when they had found a suitable site for the purpose. This place the Romans call the Lupercal, but we should call it Lykaion or 'Lycaenum'. Now, it is true, since the district about the sacred precinct has been united with the city, it has become difficult to make out by conjecture the ancient nature of the place. Nevertheless, at first, we are told, there was a large cave under the hill overarched by a dense wood; deep springs issued from beneath the rocks, and the glen adjoining the cliffs was shaded by thick and lofty trees. In this place they raised an altar to the god and performed their traditional sacrifice, which the Romans have continued to offer up to this day in the month of February, after the winter solstice, without altering anything in the rites then performed. (*Rom. Antiq.* 1.32)

Both the *Lykaion* in Rome and the *Paneion* in Paneas/Caesarea Philippi are examples of Greek cults (of Pan in particular) being usurped in a Roman context. The *Lykaion*/Lupercal was repaired by Augustus and the annual Lupercalia festival on the 15th of February was restored by the

²⁹⁶ Berlin, 'Augusteum', 5.

²⁹⁷ Collins, *Mark*, 399. See also, 2.10 above.

Emperor.²⁹⁸ It is also noteworthy that Marcus Agrippa – Augustus’ friend and right-hand in his building program – adorned the marble colonnades of the Saepta Iulia on *Campus Martius* in Rome with a statue of Pan teaching Olympus to play the Syrx, known from earlier Greek original and numerous later copies.²⁹⁹

Wilson observes that the physical sites of the *Paneion* and the *Lykaion* were “strikingly similar”.³⁰⁰ Nevertheless, Wilson argues that while Augustus’ interest in the cave on the Palatine hill was the mythical connection with Romulus and Remus and the founding of Rome at this site, the cave in Paneas by contrast did not carry any political significance, and he sees no “obvious connection between Pan and Augustus”.³⁰¹ The argument set out so far suggests otherwise. Apart from the charged past and the aura of victory connected to the site, pointed out by Berlin, Pan himself had an important role in connecting Rome to its archaic past (seen in Roman pastoral poetry), as a bringer of fruitfulness (an important theme in the Golden Age ideology) and was associated with Augustus’ sign of birth (Capricorn), as we have seen. The excavators of Banias suggest that the Augusteum had no regular back wall, so that the cave of Pan formed the *adyton* of the temple, in similar manner as the temple façade in front of the cave on the Palatine hill with the grotto behind left in its natural state.³⁰² This also explains having a “residence” in close connection to the shrine of Pan also in Paneas/Caesarea Philippi, as Augustus had in Rome (the imperial palace stood close to the Palatine hill). The motivation for Herod to honour Augustus with a temple in front of the cave of Pan as an analogy/counterpart to the setting in Rome would have made perfect sense.

Before the cult of Pan was established below Mount Hermon in Hellenistic time, the site was a place of worship to Baal, the god of fertility and weather. As witnessed in the Hebrew Bible, Hermon was referred to as “Baal-Hermon” (Judg 3:3), and in Josh 11:16-17; 13:5 the conquering of the land given to Joshua by YHWH is described as reaching up to “Baal-Gad...below Mount Hermon” in the north. Baal-Gad might refer to the same place as Paneas/Caesarea Philippi, and it is in any case the northern limit and apex of the promised land with great significance in Deuteronomistic ideology.³⁰³ Unfortunately, there is to date no

²⁹⁸ Wiseman, ‘Lupercal’, 15. Wiseman argues convincingly that the honoured god was in fact Pan (and not Faunus, or any other).

²⁹⁹ Zanker, *Images*, 142.

³⁰⁰ Wilson, *Caesarea Philippi*, 14.

³⁰¹ Wilson, *Caesarea Philippi*, 14.

³⁰² Ma’oz, ‘Banias’, 140. See also Wilson, *Caesarea Philippi*, 14.

³⁰³ ABD, ‘Baal-Gad’.

archaeological evidence from the sanctuary of Pan pointing to a Semitic cult from pre-Hellenistic time, but as Wilson points out, “the *absence* of a Ba’al cult at a huge spring, however, would require an explanation.”³⁰⁴ According to Ma’oz Zvi (director of the excavation of the sanctuary of Pan 1988-1994), “the introduction of Pan cult at Banias may have been a successful attempt to compete with and replace the ancient Semitic cult at Dan”.³⁰⁵ The fertility rites performed in the Lupercalia festival to “purge the community of the evils of barrenness and disease and ensure the fertility of the ground, the flocks and the women”, have, according to Wilson, “amazing resemblance to the fertility rights of the ancient Phoenician/Canaanite population of Syria and provide further evidence as to why the transition from the worship of the ancient Ba’als of Canaan led, quit comfortably to the worship of Pan.”³⁰⁶

The site of Tel Dan, situated only 3 km from Paneas, has been excavated by Biran Avraham, and is now identified as the biblical city of Dan (Laish/Leshem, cf. Josh 19:47; Judg 18:29). A votive inscription in Greek and Aramaic “To the God who is in Dan” dated to second century B.C. was found in 1976, confirming the identification of the site with the biblical Dan.³⁰⁷ The “high place” (*bamah*) where Jerobeam I installed a golden calf and “appointed a festival on the fifteenth day of the eighth month like the festival that was in Judah [i.e. Sukkot, my comment], and he offered sacrifices on the altar” (1 Kgs 12:32), has been identified with an altar platform at the excavation site.³⁰⁸ Biran suggests that the activity of the cultic area at Dan continued into the third or fourth century CE. but no clear evidence of an active cult dated later than the votive inscription from Hellenistic time has been presented.³⁰⁹

As Tzaferis points out, after the destruction of the Northern Kingdom in 723 B.C., the sanctuary regressed, and not least because of demographical changes in the area it is difficult to claim the continuation of a cult at Tel Dan going back to Jerobeam. Tzaferis nevertheless suggests that “The god who is in Dan” worshiped at the *bamah* sanctuary was in fact the traditional deity of the tribe of Dan, taken up in Hellenised form and

³⁰⁴ Wilson, *Caesarea Philippi*, 2 note 7. Italics original.

³⁰⁵ Ma’oz, ‘Banias’, 137.

³⁰⁶ Wilson, *Caesarea Philippi*, 58.

³⁰⁷ See Biran, Avraham. ‘Dan’ in Shtern, Efraim (Ed.). *The New Encyclopedia of Archeological Excavations in the Holy Land*. 1. Simon & Schuster, 1993. 331.

³⁰⁸ Biran, ‘Dan’, 327.

³⁰⁹ Ma’oz doubts “that there was any substantial cultic activity on the tell after the Hellenistic period.”

Nickelsburg, George WE. *1 Enoch 1: A Commentary on the Book of 1 Enoch, Chapters 1–36; 81–108*. Augsburg Fortress Publishers, 2001. 244 n 13.

accepted under its original name. The traditional cult of Dan, together with the Greek cult of Pan, and the Roman cult to Augustus (with the erecting of the Augusteum at Paneion in 19 B.C.) was, according to Tzaferis, an example of a paradoxical religious interchange between the Greek and the oriental religions, where three cults operated simultaneously by the same people in the same area.³¹⁰

So, either some local cult co-existed with the cult of Pan (and the imperial cult), or it had been usurped by the cult of Pan. In any case, in New Testament time, with the erected Augusteum at the Paneion, and the founding of Caesarea Philippi as the capitol of Philip's rule and a centre of political and religious power, Pan was unquestionably the most important deity in the city including its vicinity.³¹¹ Thus, the cult at nearby Dan was either more or less obsolete, closely associated with the cult to Pan, or included in it.³¹² The central place and symbolic significance of the temple and the sanctuary of *Paneion* is confirmed by numismatic evidence. During the rule of Herod Philip, series of coins were minted in Caesarea Philippi, with Augustus, Tiberias, Livia or Philip himself on the obverse, and always the Baniyas temple on the reverse. This temple is according to numismatists the temple mentioned by Josephus, i.e., the Augusteum at the *Paneion*.³¹³

In the cultural context of Mark's gospel, Pan was most likely the current "successor" of the ancient Baal cult of Hermon. Notwithstanding the difficulties of tracing the cult historically, the geographical continuation between Baal and Pan is clear enough. Thus, the very least we can say is that the cult of Pan was a significant part of the religious milieu in the area of Caesarea Philippi in the time of Jesus and the Gospel of Mark. The fact that Herod Philip chose the site for his capitol, transforming the cult from a rural to an urban with Pan as its patron-god, must have heightened its prestige and reputation.³¹⁴

³¹⁰ Tzaferis, 'God who is in Dan'.

³¹¹ "The worship of Pan was the main cult in Paneas/Banias, although there were other cults (of 'attendant' or 'visiting' divinities of minor importance) that existed concomitantly and throughout the Roman period. The real patron-god of the site, however, was undoubtedly Pan, as can be deduced from the name Paneas or Panias." (Ovadiah, A., & Mucznik, S. *Worshipping the Gods: Art and Cult in Roman Eretz Israel: with 472 illustrations*. Leiden: Alexandros Press, 2009. 171.) According to Tzaferis, "Pan was apparently not the only deity worshiped at Caesarea, but certainly he was the most important and as such the destiny of the city was under his tutelage." ('God who is in Dan', 134.)

³¹² It is noteworthy that during medieval time, Baniyas was identified with biblical Dan by the Jewish inhabitants. (Ma'oz, 'Baniyas', 136.)

³¹³ Wilson, *Caesarea Philippi*, 13.

³¹⁴ Berlin, 'Archaeology', 31.

We have seen important aspects of the historical and geographical setting of the area of Paneas/Caesarea Philippi that provides a context relevant for the events in this area narrated in the Caesarea-Philippi-cycle. I will argue in my analysis of the transfiguration event in Mark 9 (section 3.5) that Jesus' ascending the mountain (Hermon) at Caesarea Philippi takes up Elijah typology from the story in 1 Kgs 18 where Elijah contests the Baal prophets. In later times, as we saw, Eusebius tells the story of the Christian Astyrius who defeated the priest of Pan. Interestingly, Wilson observes in passing that this story is reminiscent of the contest between Elijah and the prophets of Baal.³¹⁵ If the Pan-cult in Baniyas was in continuation (either as a historical reality or in the constructed biblical history of Jews/Jewish Christians in this area) with the Baal-cult in nearby Dan, then the story of Astyrius might have been seen, by Christ believers in this area, as a continuation of a long tradition of religious competition, linking the Deuteronomistic sovereignty of YHWH over Baal, with Jesus' power over the demon(s) (cf. Mark 9:14-28).

2.10.2 Pan Worship at Other Places in and Near Palestine

Archaeological evidence suggests that Pan worship in (or near) Roman Palestine is not restricted to Paneas/Caesarea Philippi. We should note from the outset that since Pan was generally worshiped at rural locations, we should expect a relatively low representation of Pan in cities or populated areas (which are more often of interest for excavations). Nevertheless, examples of artistic media and epigraphy that are (or could be) dated before the composition of Mark include: a *protome* (head and torso adornment) found in Tel Anafa, just south of Paneas/Caesarea Philippi, dated to the Hellenistic period, featuring thick hair with horn-like ends, beard, and protruding eyebrows, identified as Pan.³¹⁶ A statuette found on the acropolis in Sepphoris depicts Pan sitting, playing the syrinx.³¹⁷ A votive inscription, 69 x 114 cm, to Pan in Eliah's Cave on Mount Carmel:

1. MA KHNOI OI ΠANI CY
2. [.]ΑΓΟΥCI ΔΟ[.]NHC AKI[O]
3. [C]NO K EPωC
4. [. . . .]OΞΙΔΑΛAC []
5. [] ΠΑΤPOC []

³¹⁵ Wilson, *Caesarea Philippi*, 85.

³¹⁶ Ovadiah and Mucznik, *Worshipping*, 168.

³¹⁷ Ovadiah and Mucznik, *Worshipping*, 168.

6. [] KAI CY []
1. Μὰ κῆνοι οἱ Πανὶ συ
2. [ν]άγουσι, Δό[μ]νης ακι[ο]
3. [σ]νο κ(αὶ) Ἔρω
4. [. . . .]οξιδαλας []
5. [] πατρὸς []
6. [] καὶ σὺ(?) []
1. For those who to Pan gathered
2. together, Domnes aki[o]
3. []no and Eros 4. [. . . .]oxidalas []
5. [] of the father []
6. [] and you(?) [].³¹⁸

Asher Ovadiah notes that Πάν (line 1) is in the dative case, indicating a dedicatory inscription and that the word μὰ (line 1) “appears to be an exclamation, a particle used in asseverations and oaths”.³¹⁹ Moreover, he concludes that Pan was venerated at this site “under the auspices of Baal Carmel, to whom the Cave was dedicated”.³²⁰ The dating of this inscription is not certain but the cave was used “as a pagan cultic place (possibly a shrine) in honour of Ba‘al Carmel (identified with Zeus/Jupiter), with Pan and Eros as secondary deities, in the Roman period and perhaps even earlier”, according to Ovadiah.³²¹

Most interesting, however, is a well-preserved bronze mask dated to the first to second centuries CE, discovered in November 2014 by a team led by Michael Eisenberg in the city of Hippos-Sussita (2 km from the east coast of the Sea of Galilee).³²² Hippos is one of the cities of the Decapolis and the only *polis* in the central and southern Golan region.³²³ It is situated 2 km from the shore of the Sea of Galilee straight to the east across the sea from Tiberias, to which the city had trade connections.³²⁴ The city was built on a flat-topped foot-hill (350 m above the lake) and would have been

³¹⁸ Ovadiah, Asher and Pierri, Rosario. *Elijah's Cave on Mount Carmel and Its Inscriptions*. Archaeopress Publishing Limited, 2015. Inscription No. 149, page 50.

³¹⁹ Ovadiah and Pierri, *Elijah's Cave*, 50-51.

³²⁰ Ovadiah and Pierri, *Elijah's Cave*, 51.

³²¹ Ovadiah and Pierri, *Elijah's Cave*, 8.

³²² Eisenberg, Michael, ‘The Propylaeum of the Extra Muros Sanctuary at Hippos’. In Eisenberg, Michael and Asher Ovadiah (Eds.), *Cornucopia: Essays in Honor of Arthur Segal*, *Archaeologica* 180 (2019): 95-121. See also, Eisenberg, Michael. ‘Pan at Hippos: Face of Greek God Unearthed’, *Biblical Archaeological Review* 6 (2015): 41-45. 72.

³²³ Eisenberg, ‘Propylaeum’, 96.

³²⁴ Epstien, Claire, ‘Hippos (Sussita)’ in Shtern, Efraim (Ed.), *The New Encyclopedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land*. 3. Simon & Schuster, 1993. 634.

visible from almost any spot on the lake and from the Galilean shores. Its large territory extended down to the lake and included Jewish villages.³²⁵

The mask of Pan measures 30 x 28 cm, weights 4,97 kg, and has the features of similar masks and sculptures known from the Hellenistic and Roman world, but “includes strands of a goat beard” that all together “make it easy to identify [as] depicting the Greek God Pan/Roman Faunus and not just a generic depiction of a satyr”, according to Eisenberg.³²⁶ The bronze mask was found in the fill, inside one of the towers of a monumental gate (*propylaeum*) on the western slope. The propylaeum formed the entrance to an area (including a public bathhouse, and a theatre), outside the city walls that likely served as a sanctuary, according to Eisenberg. The rough rear-side of the mask shows that it has been attached to the wall, facing the peoples entering the gate, or on an altar.³²⁷ Eisenberg’s interpretation suggests that the sanctuary belonged to Pan and/or Dionysos, both rustic gods and often represented together. The mask to Pan is, however, the only religious attribute found (thus far). In



Ill. 8. Dr. Michael Eisenberg holding the mask of Pan (before restauration). Hippos-Sussita, November, 2014.

Image source: Wikimedia Commons. Licence number CC BY-SA 3.0. Author username Hanay. (https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Michael_Eisenberg_with_the_Mask_of_Pan_from_Hippos.jpg)

³²⁵ Epstien, ‘Hippos (Sussita)’, 634.

³²⁶ Eisenberg, ‘Propylaeum’, 110.

³²⁷ Eisenberg, ‘Propylaeum’, 109, 116.

any case, according to Eisenberg, the appearance and possible cult to Pan (and Dionysos) “should be of no surprise” taking into account the nearby cult of Pan in Caesarea Philippi.³²⁸

Though we cannot be certain that this mask hung in the monumental gate right outside Hippos’ city wall by the time of Jesus or even Mark, it shows nevertheless the rising popularity of the cult of Pan, beyond Paneas/Caesarea Philippi. Presumably, Pan did not show up suddenly as a stranger among the deities of Decapolis and the coastal area in the second century, even if this unusual artifact was installed in Hippos towards the later part of the date-spectrum. Together with the additional evidence presented above, and the fact that one of the most famous sanctuaries to Pan was well established in the early first century, we should conclude that Pan was well-known and worshipped in gentile areas surrounding Galilee in the first century, in addition to the cult of his own city.

In relation to the narratives in Mark, the journeys to the Decapolis area, where Jesus would have encountered polytheistic worship, among a Jewish population, are of definite interest. In section 5.2.2, I will evaluate the story of the Gerasean demon taking place on the east side of the lake to explore possible allusions to Pan.

2.11 Conceptual Overlaps Between Jesus and Pan

In addition to Pan’s role in the Roman Empire, and the connections between Pan and Baal in relation to the geographical setting of Mount Hermon which put Pan in a position of a religious competitor to Christ, we can tentatively compare similar features that could have sparked comparison between Pan and Christ as competitors by means of identification or as antagonists.

The geographical proximity between Christ and Pan not only relates to the conjunction at Paneas/Caesarea Philippi (and the Dekapolis area). The two deities also share the same landscape, or – if taken as antagonists – compete for the same geographical niche. Pan as well as Christ are rural deities dwell in the wilderness. Mark depicts Jesus as a son of a carpenter (Mark 6:2) from a small rural village in a peripheral part of the empire. Mark’s Jesus typically avoids cities and focus instead on the rural countryside. Moreover, Mark presents Jesus as spending time in the wilderness regularly. In Mark 1:45b, the author describes Jesus as staying

³²⁸ Eisenberg, ‘Propylaeum’, 116.

outside in desert places (ἔξω ἐπ’ ἐρήμοις τόποις ἦν), with the imperfect tense that points to residing rather than occasional visits (see also 3.5 and 3.6 below). Jesus goes out to the wilderness in the temptation story (Mark 1:12), where he dwelled with the wild beasts (καὶ ἦν μετὰ τῶν θηρίων). Pan – himself half-beast – is at home in forests, mountains, and wilderness areas, among wild beasts. Pan had his shrines mainly in rural places, often at natural springs and caves, as we have seen. In *Hymn to Pan* by the early Hellenistic poet Castorion of Soloia, Pan is honoured as “tender of wild beasts” (θηρονόμε Πάν).³²⁹

In Cornutus’ Stoic interpretation of the gods,³³⁰ Pan is thus described:

He passes much of his time in the wilderness because it was established that he is solitary on this basis of the fact that the cosmos is single and unique.

ἐν ταῖς ἐρήμοις δὲ διατρίβειν μάλιστα τῆς μονότητος αὐτοῦ διὰ τούτου παρισταμένης· εἷς γὰρ καὶ μονογενὴς ὁ κόσμος ἐστί.³³¹
(*Epidrome*, 27)

Pan’s sphere of operation is the earth’s generative processes, fertility, and growth. His cults and festivals reflected people’s awareness of these processes, and the need to establish a good relationship with powers of nature outside human control. In Mark, Jesus adopts agrarian imagery and talks about sowing, harvesting, and the generative processes of the earth, and connects these processes to a “spiritual” realm. This conveys the kind of analogical thinking that sees spiritual/cosmic realities as intertwined and expressed in natural processes, as discussed above. Mark’s Jesus performs controlling actions in relation to the powers of nature, revealing a role and mandate held by YHWH as creator in Jewish thought. Both Jesus and Pan serve a function of negotiating the powers of nature beyond human control.

³²⁹ Translation from Magnelli, Enrico. ‘A Note on Castorion’s Hymn to Pan (SH 310): Metre and Syntax, Reading and Listening.’ *Greece & Rome* 62.1 (2015): 87-91.

³³⁰ The Stoic philosopher Lucius Annaeus Cornutus (flourished 40-60 CE) wrote the *Theologiae Graecae Compendium*, in Greek manuscripts called *Epidrome ton kata ten Helliniken Theologian Paradedomenon*, in which he makes allegorical interpretations of the Greek gods, including Pan, based mainly on etymology. For a discussion of textual critical issues of this text, see, Anscombe, Jeremy Guy. *An Etymological Commentary on Cornutus’ Epidrome*. (PhD Diss.) University of Leeds, 2005. Regarding etymology, Anscombe concludes: “In conclusion, the evidence strongly suggests that although there was a wide range of applications and levels of interpretation, etymologizing was a universal feature of Greek thought, there being no evidence that Stoics were measurably different to other philosophers in the extent of the application of etymology.” (p. 64). For other parallels between The New Testament and Cornutus, see Van Der Horst, Peter W. ‘Cornutus and the New Testament’. *Novum Testamentum* 23.2 (1981): 165-167.

³³¹ It is noteworthy that in this section to Pan, the term μονογενὴς is indirectly applied on Pan, an interesting parallel to Joh 1:18.

They both have a close relation to nature and represent the domains of rustic countryside and the wilderness.

In Pan, as we have seen, the good shepherd is implied in the character of the god by virtue of being the tender of flocks and the god of herdsmen. Pan is both the god of shepherds and himself a shepherd.³³² The good shepherd is also one important characteristic of Jesus in the New Testament. In Mark 6:7-52, which will be examined in more detail below, Jesus is, as I will argue, eloquently depicted as the good shepherd, providing food to the people in a pastoral setting, over against Herod as the bad shepherd. Given the importance of agro-pastoralism in ancient societies, the shepherd-motif took several metaphorical meanings, as we will see in chapter 4, still intelligible and relatable in this agrarian culture. In Roman pastoral literature, he represents an idyllic utopian landscape, and the fertile power of nature. For small-holders and hired shepherds involved in herding cattle in the gentile areas of first century Palestine (and other places), Pan would likely have been of certain significance, not least around Paneas/Caesarea Philippi. Jesus and Pan, we can assume, would have been two approximate deities for pagan-Christians who would have turned to a patron-god connected to their livelihood. Interestingly, in early Christianity, the iconography and function of shepherd-gods, notably Pan *kriophoros* (ram-bearer), was taken over and applied to Jesus the good shepherd. In addition to this, among real shepherds who obviously required their own patron, certain saints took this role in place of pagan shepherd deities. Shepherd saints (notably St. Mama and St. Modestos) were venerated in rural locations, often in or near mountain caves, and even together with pagan herding gods. On the Tiber Island in Rome today, where Pan/Faunus had a temple, stands the main basilica for the shepherd Saint Bartholomy.³³³

Similar to Jesus' relation to his heavenly father, and as mediator and earthly representative of YHWH in Mark, Pan had generally an auxiliary function in relation to other gods. In literature, – with some few exceptions – he plays a marginal role in the shadow of the main characters, or as part of a setting in a rural, pastoral scene. In a myth about Demeter in Pausanias, humankind is threatened because Demeter has withdrawn out of sight of

³³² Borgeaud, *Cult of Pan*, 52.

³³³ Stroszeck, Jutta. 'Divine Protection for Shepherd and Sheep: Apollon, Hermes, Pan and their Christian Counterparts St Mamas, St Themistocles and St. Modestos'. *Pecus: Man and Animal in Antiquity, Proceedings of Conference at the Swedish Institute in Rome*, Rome, Italy: 2004.

the Olympians, to a cave.³³⁴ Demeter curses the land to sterility in grief over her daughter who was stolen by Hades. Borgeaud points out Pan's mediating function in this story: "Pan's role in the crisis is to re-establish the broken communication between Zeus (guarantor of cultural and cosmic equilibrium) and the divinity charged with nourishing mankind".³³⁵ Pan could reach Demeter in her hidden position since he is at home in caves, and thus mediate between the Olympians and Demeter.

In a passage in *Natural History*, Pliny gives an account of the geography and inhabitants of Baetica (southern Spain):

M. Varro informs us, that the Iberians, the Persians, the Phœnicians, the Celts, and the Carthaginians spread themselves over the whole of Spain; that the name "Lusitania" is derived from the games (lusus) of Father Bacchus, or the fury of his frantic attendants, and that Pan was the governor of the whole of it. (*Plin. Nat. 3.3* English translation by Riley, Henry T. 1855.)

The translator notes that

Plutarch, quoting from the Twelfth Book of the Iberica of Sosthenes, tells us that, 'After Bacchus had conquered Iberia [the present Spain], he left Pan to act as his deputy, and he changed its name and called the country Pania, after himself, which afterwards became corrupted into Spania'.

We see that Pan appears as the "governor of the whole of it" (*Pana praeffectum eius universae*, meaning the whole of Spain, and not just the games, which is clear from the quotation in Plutarch that Pliny is referring to, according to the translator). The point is that Pan was delegated this position from Dionysus/Bacchus, indicating again Pan's role as deputy god. In Pindar, Pan is styled as the dog of the Great Mother.³³⁶ Borgeaud once again points to Pan's inferior position that

³³⁴ "The account of the people of Thelpousa (Thelpusa) [in Arkadia (Arcadia)] about the mating of Poseidon and Demeter . . . Afterwards, they say, angry with Poseidon and grieved at the rape of Persephone, she [Demeter] put on black apparel and shut herself up in this cavern for a long time. But when the fruits of the earth were perishing, and the human race dying yet more through famine, no god, it seemed, knew where Demeter was hiding, until Pan, they say, visited Arkadia. Roaming from mountain to mountain as he hunted, he came at last to Mount Elaios (Elaeus) and spied Demeter, the state she was in and the clothes she wore. So Zeus learnt this from Pan, and sent the Moirai (Fates) to Demeter, who listened to the Moirai (Moirae, Fates) and laid aside her wrath, moderating her grief as well." Pausanias, *Description of Greece* 8.42.1 (Translation LCL).

³³⁵ Borgeaud, *Cult of Pan*, 58.

³³⁶ Borgeaud, *Cult of Pan*, 174.

“brings him close to mankind, while making clear the necessary liminal function he serves.”³³⁷

The mediating role of Jesus Christ in the New Testament is clear and can be seen in light of the notion of divine agency in Second Temple Judaism, attributed to exalted patriarchs like Enoch and Moses and the personified Wisdom and Logos.³³⁸ However, when a pagan audience first encountered the gospel, they would rather have related it to their approximate world of gods, demigods, and deified humans. It is possible that Pan could be perceived as a counterpart to Christ also in this respect.

In his Orpheic and Stoic interpretations, Pan is a hybrid of man and beast, an earthly and rustic incarnation of god and nature that embodies the twofold nature of universe: the lower earthly and material (the goat-part of Pan’s lower body) and the divine upper part represented by his human upper-body.³³⁹ Avoiding the word incarnation in relation to Mark’s gospel, and putting aside e.g., Joh 1:14, we can still discern a corresponding presentation of Jesus in Mark. Jesus’ rustic origin and character, and his emphasized human profile in Mark, is contrasted with his divine powers and authority. Typically, Mark presents Jesus as *both* human and divine.

The divinity of Christ and his powers in the cosmic realm implied in Mark’s narratives, is interesting in relation to the monotheistic tendencies of Pan’s universal and cosmic interpretations in the philosophical traditions. In Neo-Platonism, Stoicism and the mystical Orphic tradition, Pan was identified with the cosmic All. The universalistic interpretation of Pan has probably its roots in the platonic dualism, apparent also in Plato’s *Cratylus*.³⁴⁰ Cornutus, again, begins his section on Pan by pointing out that he is “All”:

And it is ‘Pan’ as well, since it is identical with everything (τοῦτον εἶναι καὶ τὸν Πᾶνα, ἐπειδὴ τῷ παντί ὁ αὐτός ἐστι). He is hairy and goat-like in his lower parts because of the roughness of the earth; his upper parts have the form of a human, because the ruling part of the cosmos, which is rational, is in the aether.³⁴¹

³³⁷ Borgeaud, *Cult of Pan*, 175.

³³⁸ See Davis, Philip G. ‘Divine Agents, Mediators, and New Testament Christology’. *The Journal of Theological Studies* 45.2 (1994): 479-503.

³³⁹ Athanassakis, Apostolos N. and Wolkow, Benjamin M. *The Orphic Hymns: Translation, Introduction and Notes*. John Hopkins University Press, 2013. 95.

³⁴⁰ Plato *Cratylus* 408b, probably the earliest source to the idea of Pan as the “All”. For a thorough study on how Pan became a universal god of “All”, see Roscher, Wilhelm H. *Pan als Allgott: Eine Religionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung*. Engelmann, 1893.

³⁴¹ Cornutus, *Epidrome*, 27. (English translation: Boys-Stones, *Cornutus*.)

In the Orphic *Hymn to Pan*, the abstract cosmic conceptions of the philosophers are joined with the popular traditional image of Pan as nurturing shepherd-god, bringer of fertility, in a setting of springs and caves:

I call upon Pan, (Πᾶνα καλῶ κρατερόν) the pastoral god, (νόμιον)
I call upon the universe, (κόσμοιο τὸ σύμπαν) upon the sky, the
sea, and the land, queen of all (παμβασίλειαν). (Lines 1-2)

Weaver of playful song, song of cosmic harmony (ἁρμονίαν
κόσμοιο), you induce fantasies of dread (φόβον) into the minds of
mortals, you delight in gushing springs, surrounded by goatheards
and oxheards, you dance with the nymphs, you sharpened-eye
hunter, lover of Echo. Present in all growth (παντοφυής), begetter
of all (γενέτωρ πάντων), many-named divinity (πολυώνυμε
δαῖμον), light-bringing lord of the cosmos, fructifying Paian
(παντοφυής, κοσμοκράτωρ, αὐξητά, φασεφόρε, κάρπιμε Παιάν),
cave-loving and wrathful, veritable Zeus with horns (ἄληθής Ζεὺς
ὁ κεράστης.), the earths endless plain is supported by you
(ἀπειρέσιον γαίης πέδον ἐστήρικται), and the deep-flowing water
of the weariless sea yields to you. Okeanos who girds the earth
with his eddying streams gives way to you. (6-14)

Your providence alters the natures of all, on the boundless earth
you offer nourishment to mankind (βόσκων ἀνθρώπων). (19-
20)³⁴²

In their commentary to the Orphic Hymns, Athanassakis and Wolkow describe the hymn to Pan as “combining a charming rustic materialism with the sublime power that permeates all creation.”³⁴³ Athanassakis and Wolkow also discuss an identification between Pan and Zeus in the Hymn to Pan:

³⁴² English translation from Athanassakis and Wolkow, *Orphic*, 13-14. The dating of this text is very uncertain. The “Hymns of Orpheus” is mentioned by e.g., Plato (*Laws* 829d) but that the expression refers to the collection of Hymns that survived to our time, is doubted. Athanassakis and Wolkow reason that the Orphic Hymns was composed in one of the first four centuries CE, and that the “purity of language”, “the nearly flawless hexameter”, and the “remarkably absence of anything faintly Christian” points to the earlier part of this period (Athanassakis and Wolkow, *Orphic*, X). If the text is composed in written form after the composition of the gospel of Mark does not, however, make this source irrelevant for our study, since it most likely rests on, and reflects, much older texts and traditions related to Orpheus and Orphic traditions, available to the author or authors.

For an argument for the relevance of the Orphic Hymns for the interpretation of Colossians, See Gordley, Matthew Eli. *A Prose Hymn of Christ: The Language, Form, and Content of Colossians 1: 15–20 in its Greco-Roman and Jewish Contexts and in the Context of the Epistle to the Colossians*. University of Notre Dame, 2006. 218-219.

³⁴³ Athanassakis and Wolkow, *Orphic*, 96.

It is also suggestive that in the Orphic theogony reported by Hieronymos, Protogonos was called Zeus, who, as master of the entire cosmos, was also known as Pan. [...] This identification of Pan and Zeus helps explain why Pan became a god whose domain extends over all creation.³⁴⁴

Pan's role as "begetter of all", they comment, "fits well with Zeus' role as father of gods and men in the tradition."³⁴⁵ Moreover, they suggest that Pan's presence [in the Orphic hymns] "seems to be meant as a more concrete realization of the abstract entities addressed in the earlier hymns and a transitional figure to more anthropomorphic ones."³⁴⁶ (Earlier hymns in the compilation includes hymn to Night, Sky, Ether, Protogonos, the Stars, the Sun, Selene, and Physis, followed by hymn to Pan.)

The identification of Pan with the "All", is perhaps even more clear in an anonymous hymn attributed to Epidauros, in which Pan is characterized as a cosmic dancer, and has constant references to Pan's cosmic universality, through the harping on the sense of παν: παμφυῆς, πανωιδὸς, πέλεις ἔρεισμα πάντων.³⁴⁷ Especially the last clause "You are everything's support" has parallels in the magical hymn (PGM II no. I.12): "σῇ δυνάμει στοιχεῖα πέλει καὶ φύεθ' ἅπαντα (through your power the elements cohere and everything comes into existence)". In the second hymn, Pan is described as "ὁ τὰ πάντα κτίσσας (the one who created all/the universe)" and similar formulations.³⁴⁸

It is very likely that, already in the last centuries B.C, Second Temple Judaism came in contact with these philosophical and popular cosmic and "monotheizing" associations with Pan. Ben Sira's praise to the Creator and his cosmic rule (42:15-43:27), concludes with:

Because of him, his messenger succeeds, and by his word everything holds together. Many things we might say, and we would never arrive, and the consummation of words is: He is all.

δι' αὐτὸν εὐοδοῖ ἄγγελος αὐτοῦ καὶ ἐν λόγῳ αὐτοῦ σύγκειται τὰ πάντα πολλὰ ἐροῦμεν καὶ οὐ μὴ ἀφικόμεθα καὶ συντέλεια λόγων
τὸ πᾶν ἐστίν αὐτός (Sir 43:26-27 LXX)

³⁴⁴ Athanassakis and Wolkow, *Orphic*, 95.

³⁴⁵ Athanassakis and Wolkow, *Orphic*, 97.

³⁴⁶ Athanassakis and Wolkow, *Orphic*, 97.

³⁴⁷ Furley, William D., and Jan Maarten Bremer. *Greek Hymns: The Texts in Translation*. Vol. 1. Mohr Siebek, 2001. 240. The dating is unclear, but Furley and Bremer opt for mid-Hellenistic time.

³⁴⁸ Furley, William D., and Jan Maarten Bremer. *Greek Hymns: The Texts in Translation*. Vol. 2. Mohr Siebek, 2001. 198. The verb κτίζω is likely an influence from the LXX, see Pachoumi, Eleni. *The Concepts of the Divine in the Greek Magical Papyri*. Vol. 102. Mohr Siebeck, 2017.

Martin Hengel points out several examples of identifications of YHWH with Greek conceptions of God, in the context of the monotheistic tendencies in philosophical schools, and the *interpretatio graeca*.³⁴⁹ This tendency could also work in the opposite direction, i.e., that Jews could appropriate and assimilate the philosophic universal God of All with the God of Israel. One example is found in the inscriptions – both Jewish and pagan – from Ptolemaic period in a temple to Pan in northern Egypt.³⁵⁰ According to Hengel,

these pagan inscriptions, which all run in the same way, mention the God – Pan Euhodos – by name, whereas the two Jews speak only of ‘Theos’ in general terms. Nevertheless, ‘Pan’, as universal God, was for them presumably identical with the God of the Jews.³⁵¹

Hengel then connects this with the passage in Ben Sira: “The grandson and translator of Ben Sira could likewise say, following the spirit of his time: τὸ πᾶν ἔστιν αὐτός.”³⁵² Freyne makes a similar conclusion and suggests that τὸ πᾶν ἔστιν αὐτός alludes to the common idea of Pan as universal god of nature, with the effect that “it was the Hebrew God of creation who really deserved the epithet ‘All/Pan’, since Yahweh was the creator of heaven and earth and all that was in them.”³⁵³

In the New Testament, it is easy to see parallels to the “cosmic Christology”³⁵⁴ expressed in Col 1, Eph 1, 1 Cor 8:6 and 1 Cor 15:23-28. Here, Christ is the personification of the philosophical conception of the cosmic and universal All. Paul, and the author(s) of the letters to Colossians and Ephesians, are likely in a debate with contemporary Greco-Roman theological and cosmological ideas, distinct from, but not completely different to their own theology and Christology.³⁵⁵ Moreover, it is interesting that Pan gets the epithet κοσμοκράτωρ (“cosmic ruler”) in the Orphic hymn (see above), a term used in Eph 6:12 (“πρὸς τοὺς κοσμοκράτορας τοῦ σκότους τούτου/against the cosmic rulers of this present darkness”, my translation) referring in a negative sense to the evil forces of the universe. Thus, in the competitive environment of the New Testament, we find possible ways in which Christ and Pan could have been

³⁴⁹ Hengel, *Judaism*, 261-267.

³⁵⁰ In Redesieh, Apollonopolis Magna, Egypt. (Hengel, *Judaism*, 264.)

³⁵¹ Hengel, *Judaism*, 264.

³⁵² Hengel, *Judaism*, 264. See also, Gordon, Robert P. (ed.) *The God of Israel*. Cambridge University Press, 2007. 255-257.

³⁵³ Freyne, *Jesus*. 56.

³⁵⁴ See Van Kooten, *Cosmic Christology*.

³⁵⁵ Van Kooten, *Cosmic Christology*, 1.

juxtaposed by means of both identification and opposition. Christ as Pan – the god of All – or Christ as antagonist to, and deliverer from “the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places/τὰ πνευματικὰ τῆς πονηρίας ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις” (Eph 6:12b).

A closer analysis of these texts falls outside the scope of this study, but it is likely that the author of Mark was aware of the Pauline discourses. In Mark, the Christology is not explicit as in the Pauline texts mentioned above. As I have argued earlier, however, the stories of Jesus (and other features) in Mark’s gospel reveal a cosmic dimension. The preaching, and the coming of the kingdom of God entailed a redemption and transformation of the cosmos, and Jesus’ power over nature strongly suggests a cosmic rulership (see 2.3 above). Especially Jesus’ powers over the elements, the wind, and the storm on the “sea”, alludes to Jewish traditions that depicts YHWH power over the cosmic sea, and the cosmic sea-monster (see 4.4). Interestingly, Pan has in Greek myth a role to play in the primordial chaos-battle, again acting as deputy.

In Oppian and Pseudo-Appolodorus’ renderings of the myth of Zeus’ battle against the titans, Pan has an operative role as assistant in the battle. Borgeaud comments:

Pan, foster brother of Zeus, put to flight the partisans of Cronos and thus used his destructive powers to clear the ground for the construction of the Olympian order. Order was not, however, made really secure until the giants had been eliminated and Zeus had defeated Typhon. This latter monster was a serpent raised by Gaia in fury at the defeat of her sons; it embodied the last chance of a relapse into the original violence and disorder. Significantly, Zeus, could not conquer it without Pan’s help. Oppian calls Pan ‘saviour of Zeus, destroyer of Typhon’.³⁵⁶

The maritime monster Typhon was well known in antiquity and had his lair in the cave of Corycos in Cilicia (not to be confused with the Corycian cave in Greece). In the Oppian version of the myth, Pan had been taught the fishermen’s art from Hermes, and Pan aids Zeus by luring Typhon out from the Corycian Cave by cooking fish on the shore. This myth has similarities with the cosmic battle against the maritime chaos monster in Babylonian myths (and other Chaos-Cosmos battle myths), to which we see clear allusions in accounts of YHWH as creator who defeats the powers of chaos in the Hebrew Bible. Baal was known in myths to defeat the

³⁵⁶ Borgeaud, *Cult of Pan*, 113.

dragon *Yamm*, and in Pindar and Euripedes, Pan is identified as Ἀργειφόντης (dragon slayer).³⁵⁷

Taking the presented similarities together, I conclude that there are several overlapping functions and motifs in the cultural encyclopaedia in the first century that could spark comparisons between Jesus and Pan. In the next chapter, but more systematically in chapter 5, I will elaborate Pan's demonic and satanic associations that puts him in contrast to Mark's Jesus. It is now time to turn to the text of the gospel of Mark.

³⁵⁷ Miller, Robert. 'Mythic Dimensions of the Source of the River Jordan'. *Aram* 29 (2017): 207-219. 210.

3 Elijah – Baal and Jesus – Pan

In this chapter, I will review the transfiguration story in the matrix of eschatological expectations of the return of Elijah in Second Temple Judaism, together with the context of Mount Hermon and Paneas/Caesarea Philippi as the city of Pan. The identification of Christ and Pan will be retrojected on the Caesarea Philippi-cycle in Mark against the geographical context of Dan/Paneas and Mount Hermon, both in its history in Jewish tradition, and its geo-political, and geo-theological importance in its first century context. I will argue that the symbolic significance of the transfiguration event, followed by the rebuking of the demon, likely implies a polemic between Jesus and Pan. As we have seen, the Pan cult at this place was most likely perceived as a continuation of the Baal-cult at nearby Dan.

Eschatological expectations of Second Temple Judaism entailed notions of Elijah having a very central role in the awaited restoration of the Land and the forthcoming of “The day of the Lord”. These expectations are mirrored in the synoptic gospels, not least in Mark. As we will see, Mark’s gospel seems to have a strong intertextual relationship to the Elijah-Elisha cycle in 1 Kgs 17-2 Kgs 13, and Jesus seems to take the role of Elijah in several episodes in Mark. Moreover, Mark’s use of the prophetic texts suggests that he is not only using the Deuteronomistic texts as a convenient literary model, or picking popular prophetic sayings and motifs, but that he stands in a theological tradition, which he continues and re-interprets in the light of the Christ-event.³⁵⁸ I will argue that the transfiguration story in Mark echoes, and alludes to, the climactic event on Mount Carmel in 1 Kgs 18, and the mythic and cultic significance of Mount Hermon seen in Jewish apocalyptic traditions. I will try to show that the cult of Pan, active in this area in New Testament time, is a relevant part of the historical context, and that this contextualisation sheds light on the importance of geographical and ecological dimensions of the transfiguration story.

³⁵⁸ Deuteronomy is more often cited or alluded to than the rest of the Pentateuch, the strong resemblance between the stories in Mark and the Elijah-Elisha cycle. As Walter Brueggemann points out, Deuteronomistic theology is not simply the theology of Deuteronomy, but a textual body defined by style and subject-matter, and as a continuing tradition through Second Temple Judaism, which continued “with vitality into the New Testament”. See, Brueggemann, Walter. *Reverberations of Faith: A Theological Handbook of Old Testament Themes*. Westminster John Knox Press, 2002. 55. See also Scott, James M. ‘Paul’s use of Deuteronomistic tradition.’ *Journal of Biblical Literature* 112.4 (1993): 645-665.

3.1 Elijah Expectations in Second Temple Judaism

In Second Temple Judaism, Elijah is a major eschatological figure expected to return and restore the covenant and the land, based on the prophesy in Mal 3-4. In Ben Sira (48:1-14), Elijah's historical role is elaborated and exalted. His expected return is assumed (v. 10-11), in keeping with Mal 3, and thus, he also gets a role as a future eschatological figure with the role to prepare and restore the tribes of Jacob before the coming wrath (v. 10). His zealous righteousness is emphasized (v. 2), as well as his miraculous deeds (v. 4, 14) – even to raise the dead (v. 5). Based on the narrative account of Elijah in 1 Kgs, the idea of the return of Elijah in Mal 3-4, and the elaboration of his role in Ben Sira, later Jewish tradition and popular legend recurringly utilize the Elijah figure in various ways. A detailed analysis of all the uses of Elijah in OT pseudepigrapha, The Qumran texts, Targums and other texts would be too extensive for the present study, but some general traits should be pointed out, however. First, the awe for Elijah is stressed because of his role in the history of Israel in 1 Kgs, notably his miracles, feeding of the ravens, and his victory over Baal and his prophets on Mount Carmel. Secondly, Elijah is frequently depicted as a role model for the people, zealous and devoted to prayer, performing miracles with God's power. Moreover, and most important, he figures as forerunner and restorer in the eschaton and in different ways related to the final judgement.³⁵⁹ However, the evidence of a role as forerunner to a Messiah, is not obvious in the traditions. Whether Elijah has a role as a forerunner to a Messiah, or to YHWH himself, is ambiguous.

The New Testament, as we know, likewise employ's the figure of Elijah. In Romans 11:1-5, Elijah's appealing to God not to reject his people forms an argument of typology between the remnant that did not bow their knees to Baal, and the remnant of Israel chosen by grace. In James, Elijah serves as a role model for righteous prayer (5:16-17). All four canonical gospels relate to Elijah in discourses about John the Baptist and Jesus. However, Elijah's role and function is not unambiguous. I propose that the ambiguity of his role as forerunner in Jewish traditions is reflected in the early Christian adoptions of Elijah.

³⁵⁹ This brief summery is based on Hoffeditz, David M. *A Prophet, a Kingdom, and a Messiah: The Portrayal of Elijah in the Gospels in Light of First-Century Judaism*. (Phd Dissertation). University of Aberdeen, 2000. 44-79.

3.2 Jesus as Elijah in Mark

Notwithstanding the standard depiction of John the Baptist as Elijah, we find several indications that Jesus is given the role of Elijah in the gospel narratives, particularly in Mark. Elijah's role in the gospels has been studied mainly within research concerning John the Baptist, and within the methods and questions about the historical Jesus/John the Baptist. Despite the dominant view of identifying John with Elijah, several scholars observe the strong connections between Jesus and Elijah in the gospels.³⁶⁰ Elijah is the Old Testament figure who is mentioned most frequently in Mark's gospel, more than the biblical stars, Abraham, Moses and David, or any other Old Testament name.³⁶¹ An overview of the parallel motifs between Jesus (and John the Baptist) in Mark and the Elijah(/Elisha) cycle is presented in the table below (illustration 9).

From the outset of Mark's gospel we have most likely an allusion to Elijah in John the Baptist's outfit and diet (Mk 1:6 cf. 2 Kgs 1:8), and the scripture quotation – though allegedly from Isaiah – seems to allude more to Mal 3:1 since the context, a messenger identified as Elijah in Mal 4:5 preparing the coming day of the Lord, corresponds to the context in Mark.³⁶² However, throughout Mark's gospel, there is an ambiguity/uncertainty – both among the characters in the narrative, but also, I find, expressed by the author – concerning the role of Elijah related to John the Baptist and Jesus. If we take John = Elijah as a fixed key for our reading of Mark (and the other gospels), we will fail to see the many striking parallels between Mark's Jesus and Elijah (/Elisha) in 1 Kgs 17 - 2 Kgs 13.

John the Baptist, no doubt, is “a voice crying in the wilderness”. In terms of geographical habitat, however, Jesus – like Elijah – is also at home in the wilderness and on mountains, especially so in Mark.³⁶³ The recurrent

³⁶⁰ For an overview of the research on Elijah in the gospels, see Hoffeditz, *Prophet*, 1ff. It is clear that we have no consensus among scholars as to the identity of Elijah in the gospels, a situation that seems to be the case also among the gospel writers/redactors (cf., Matt 11:14, John 1:21).

³⁶¹ Elijah is mentioned nine times, David and Moses seven, and Abraham once.

³⁶² Though not all agree that Mark in fact intended to portray John the Baptist as Elijah. So e.g. Robinson: “This could be an allusion to 2 King 1:8 [...] But the LXX and the previous English versions are almost certainly right in taking the Hebrew to mean simply that Elijah, like Esau, was a hairy man. This is the sort of man a prophet was expected to be, and, according to Zech 13:4, anyone who wished to be taken for a prophet would take on a hairy mantle. There is no suggestion that its wearer was intended to be identified specifically with Elijah.” Robinson, John Arthur Thomas. ‘Elijah, John and Jesus: An Essay in Detection’. *New Testament Studies* 4.4 (1958): 263-281. 263 n.1. See also Hoffeditz, *Prophet*, 6.

³⁶³ Mark 1:13; 1:35; 1:45; 3:13; 6:31-32; 6:46; 8:1-4; 9:2. Cf. 1 Kgs 17:2-6; 18:19ff; 19:4-8; 19:8; 2 Kgs 1:9. Note that this is also true of Pan, as we have seen earlier.

| Motif | Elijah | Jesus | John the Baptist |
|---|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------|------------------|
| Forerunner/messenger | Mal 3:1+4;5 ³⁶⁴ | ? ³⁶⁵ | Mark 1:2 |
| Clothes of camel's hair and leather belt | 2 Kgs 1:8 | - | Mark 1:6 |
| In wilderness (generally) | 1 Kgs 17:2-6 | Mark 1:35; 1:45; 6:31-32; 8:1-4 | Mark 1:4 |
| The calling of disciple(s)/successor(s) | 1 Kgs 19:19-21 | Mark 1:20; 6:7 | Mark 2:18 |
| In the wilderness for forty days and ministered by angel(s) | 1 Kgs 19:4-8 | Mark 1:12-13 | - |
| Controlling bodies of water | 2 Kgs 2:6-8 | Mark 4:35-41; 6:45-52 | - |
| Raising a dead child | 1 Kgs 17:17-24 | Mark 5:21-43 | - |
| Miracle of food/bread supply | 1 Kgs 17:7-16 (18:4) ³⁶⁶ | Mark 6:31-44, 8:1-9 | - |
| On mountain (top) | 1 Kgs 18:19f, 42; 2 Kgs 1:9 | Mark 3:13; 6:46; 9:2-8; 13:3 | - |
| Triple statement of assurance from disciple to be faithful | 2 Kgs 2:2; 2:4; 2:6 | Mark 14:31 | - |
| Ascent to heaven | 2 Kgs 2:11 | (Mark 16:19) | - |

Ill. 9. Table of parallel motifs between Elijah/Elisha, Jesus, and John the Baptist

ἦν (1:13a; 1:13b; 1:45) and προσήχeto (1:35) in imperfect tense indicates Jesus staying/dwelling, rather than occasional visits. Already in 1:12, we find a likely allusion to Elijah when Jesus is thrown out into the desert by the spirit (like Elijah was transported by the spirit in 1 Kgs 18:12) for forty days, dwelled/stayed (ἦν) in the presence of wild animals and was nourished by the angels. In 1 Kgs 19:4-8, Elijah fled out into the wilderness, was nourished by angels, and spent forty days in the presence of wild animals. Bas M. Van Iersel also points out that

this scene about Jesus in the wilderness, and particularly the messengers ministering to him there, remind the reader of Elijah

³⁶⁴ Most commentators identify the messenger in 3:1 as the prophet Elijah in Mal 4:5.

³⁶⁵ Jesus as forerunner/messenger to YHWH himself and/or "The day of the Lord" will be discussed later.

³⁶⁶ Here, Obadiah is also said to have provide "a hundred prophets" with food and water, "hidden in two caves, fifty in each". "Groups of hundreds or fifties" in Mark 6:40 might allude to the same amounts of peoples. The shepherd/pasture theme is also present in both stories (Mark 6:34;39 and 1 Kgs 18:5). Though Elijah is not the typological figure taken up by Mark's Jesus in this case, it is still a protagonist in the story, and in any case, it strengthens the intertextuality between Mark and 1 Kings.

who was able to walk 40 days to Mount Horeb in the Sinai desert after a heavenly messenger had twice supplied him with food.³⁶⁷

One can of course object that the temptation story alludes to the fundamental wilderness experience of Israel (Exod 15:22ff, Deut 8:2-6). The symbolic number of forty certainly recalls the forty years of wandering in the desert, as well as Moses' stay on Mount Sinai (Exod 24:18). Both Moses and Elijah are men of the wilderness. However, in Mark's context, Elijah is prominent for the reader, from Mark 1:2-3 (Mal 3:1+4:2) and Mark 1:6, as he is later in Mark's narrative, and the details in the story make the narrative in 1 Kgs the closest parallel. Moreover, Satan as the antagonist and agent of Jesus' temptation, echoes Jezebel (or rather Baal, whom she worships), Elijah's antagonist, and the agent behind Elijah's escape into the wilderness. The similarities to Moses and the exodus story are, I think, intelligible on the basis of a transitive relation between Moses, Elijah, and Jesus: Jesus is depicted as Elijah, who is depicted as Moses and takes up typology from the foundational story of the Exodus.

The calling of disciples in 1:16-20 has, moreover, been suggested as a parallel to Elijah's calling of Elisha. Joynes observes in this pericope "structural similarities" to 1 Kgs 19:19-21, and since this kind of appointment of a disciple is unique in the Old Testament, Joynes argues, it "provides a striking parallel to Jesus' call of the disciples."³⁶⁸ Collins also acknowledge that "the sudden summons from business to 'coming after' or 'follow' may have been inspired by 1 Kgs 19:19-21", but suggest that the Markan story might be a "deliberate intensification" of the call-story in 1 Kgs.³⁶⁹ The disciples follow immediately, whereas Elisha asks for permission to say good bye to his parents. Gundry, likewise, notes the suddenness of the disciples' response, in contrast to Elisha's. Nonetheless, the parallel between Jesus' calling and Elijah's calling is assumed also by Gundry.³⁷⁰ In the introduction to his commentary on Mark, van Iersel makes the general observation that there are "a number of episodes in which Jesus is seen to perform actions that show a strong resemblance to actions performed by Elijah."³⁷¹ Regarding 1:20, he emphasizes the

³⁶⁷ Van Iersel, Bas. *Mark: A Reader-Response Commentary* (Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement series, 164). Trans. Bisscheroux. Sheffield Academic, 1998. 102.

³⁶⁸ Joynes, Christine E. 'The Returned Elijah? John the Baptist's Angelic Identity in the Gospel of Mark'. *Scottish Journal of Theology* 58.4 (2005): 455-467. 461.

³⁶⁹ Collins, *Mark*, 157.

³⁷⁰ Gundry, Robert. *Mark: A Commentary on His Apology for the Cross*. Eerdmans Publishing, 1993. 67. Edward also follows Gundry's view, see Edwards, *Mark*, 50.

³⁷¹ Van Iersel, *Mark*, 65.

similarities between the calling stories, in which the father, according to van Iersel, “plays a similar role”, and the response of the disciples as well as of Elisha is radical, as they in both cases take drastic measures.³⁷² The outcome of both stories was in fact a whole-hearted following, after abruptly leaving family and means of income (fishing boats/farming), with or without a farewell. Thus, Jesus calling the disciples to perform the same deeds (Mark 6:7-13), just as Elijah called Elisha to continue working in the same spirit, fits much better than John (as alleged Elijah) calling Jesus (as alleged Elisha).³⁷³

In the dialogues about Jesus’ identity in Mark 6:14-16, the implied but unmentioned “people” are divided into different opinions, one of them being that Jesus is John the Baptist *redivivus*, the second that Jesus was Elijah and the third that he was a prophet. The first position, taken by Herod as he is depicted by the narrator as superstitious and somewhat paranoid is probably farthest from the truth about Jesus’ identity for the implied reader. The reader knows from 1:9 that Jesus was contemporary with John. The other notions about Jesus, on the other hand, are left uncommented by the narrator. Is the reader supposed to refute these two notions as well, as some commentators read this passage?³⁷⁴

Jesus did in fact call himself “prophet” in verse 4, and the story about Jairus’ daughter in 5:21ff has strong allusions to Elijah (1 Kgs 17:17-24), making the two latter suggestions about Jesus in 6:15 confirmed rather than disproved. Even the idea that Jesus is John the Baptist risen from the dead follows the logic that Jesus’ ministry was a continuation of John’s (1:14-15), and is thus not entirely wrong. Still, the reader is left with a sense of dissatisfaction concerning the true identity of Jesus, a typical feature of Mark. Furthermore, in the pericope right after the death of John the Baptist, in which we also find Elijah allusions,³⁷⁵ Jesus’ miraculous feeding resembles Elijah’s miraculous providing of food in 1 Kgs 17:7-16.³⁷⁶ Elisha, working in Elijah’s spirit, also performs a similar miracle in 2 Kgs 4:42-44, resembling even more Jesus’ feeding miracle.

³⁷² Van Iersel, *Mark*, 133.

³⁷³ The thesis that the pair John-Jesus is modelled after Elijah-Elisha is proposed by Roth, Wolfgang. *Hebrew Gospel: Cracking the Code of Mark*. Meyer-Stone, 1988.

³⁷⁴ E.g., Hartman, Lars. *Markusevangeliet 1:1-8:26*. EFS-förlaget, 2005. 210.

³⁷⁵ According to Joynes, “Mark’s account of John the Baptist’s death (6:17-29) is also commonly appealed to as Elijah typology, with evident parallels between the Kings account of tensions between Elijah, Ahab and Jezebel and the Markan narrative.” (Joynes, *Returned*, 461.) Here, obviously, John the Baptist, and not Jesus, gets Elijah’s role.

³⁷⁶ This applies to both feeding stories in Mark. It is not necessary here to engage in a discussion of the fact that there are two feeding stories in Mark, or in the meaning of the different versions. However, its notable that if the reader recalls Elijah’s/Elisha’s miraculous feeding also in 8:1-8, he is still fresh in the readers mind

In 8:27-28, Jesus himself asks about who the people think he is, and the disciples report the same views presented in 6:15, including the suggestion that he is Elijah. Jesus neither refutes nor confirms this, but turns instead to the disciples and asks them. Peter's answer is indeed superior to the suggestions from the people in v.28, but as the narrative continues, it is clear that even Peter's answer needs clarification.³⁷⁷ The disciples are still not clear about the identity of Jesus; Peter, or the other disciples, do not yet understand the meaning of Jesus' messiahship, and what it entails (8:31-33; 9:10, 32).

In the transfiguration story, Elijah appears (with Moses) on the mountain top, and I will later examine this passage more closely, as it is central for my argument. For now, I conclude this initial survey with a brief look at the final instance where Elijah turns up in Mark's gospel.

In the crucifixion scene in 15:35f, in a somewhat puzzling mishearing from the bystanders, Jesus calls for Elijah to come for his rescue. On the surface, this is perhaps best explained as an intended mishearing in order to mock Jesus, based on popular Jewish legends about Elijah rescuing the righteous, and the general idea of Elijah as the miracle-worker.³⁷⁸ He would be the one to call upon for a "miraculous show of power", implied from the mockery in v. 29a-32a that Jesus is challenged to help himself down from the cross.³⁷⁹ This mockery is in line with the soldiers' parody of Jesus as messiah/king of the Jews, forcing him to wear a crown of thorns and a purple robe in 15:17-18. On the level of the author's rhetoric, this creates for the implied reader a deep irony. The passage in 15:17-18 is, as Collins comments it,

ironic in its deployment of the rhetorical device in which the perspective of the author is in sharp contrast to the literal meaning, in this case to the parody of Jesus' kingship. This device depends on the collaboration of the audiences, who, along with the author, know that Jesus is indeed a king.³⁸⁰

This irony characterizes also the written sign in v. 26 ("King of the Jews"), the by-passers' mocking of Jesus in v. 29-30 as he who "rebuilds the temple in three days", and the high priests and the scribes in 31-32a,

when Elijah is explicitly discussed in 8:27ff. Collins notes that "the dialogue between Elijah and the widow is analogous to the dialogue between Jesus and the disciples in Mark 6:35-38.", (Mark, 320).

³⁷⁷ Collins, *Mark*, 402.

³⁷⁸ So e.g. Van Iersel, *Mark*, 476, Lane, William L. *The Gospel of Mark*. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1974. 573; France, *Mark*, 654 note 49.

³⁷⁹ Collins, *Mark*, 755. See also Edwards, *Mark*, 476 n 64 and France, *Mark*, 654 note 50.

³⁸⁰ Collins, *Mark*, 726.

depicting Jesus as the alleged “Messiah, King of Israel”. What Collins observes regarding the irony in 17-18 is also, I hold, true about all the mockery in these scenes. It is not satisfying to interpret v. 35b as Collins and others do, as a “rejection of one of several inadequate titles of Jesus”.³⁸¹ Instead, it fits better to read the mishearing in v. 35 as ironic in the sense that the bystanders are not plainly wrong, in the rhetoric of the author, but express a deep truth.³⁸² Just as *all* the mockery in 15:16-36 are, ironically, *correct* in what they say, the bystanders in v. 35-36 are also correct in the sense that for Jesus – and for Elijah (2 Kgs 2:1ff) – death did not have the last word. In the light of the resurrection faith, the readers know in retrospect that Jesus is in fact the true Son of God who actually could “rebuild the temple” after three days and that he did in fact have Elijah’s power to overcome death.

As demonstrated by the examples discussed above, the author of Mark seems to *confirm* that Jesus is the expected Elijah, just as it is *confirmed* that he is “Messiah”, “King of Jews”, and as the centurion confesses in v.39, “Son of God”. The identity of Jesus in Markan rhetoric is thus on the one hand plainly and literary outspoken by many different actors in the narrative, especially from the mouths of the most unexpected.³⁸³ On the other hand, Jesus’ identity remains an enigma in Mark, and the readers are time and again left with the sense that nobody has it completely right or has grasped the whole truth about Jesus’ identity. They are left to put the pieces together for themselves.

3.3 How to Account for the Similarities

Before I proceed to the kernel of my argument, and the pericope of the transfiguration story, I need to clarify some questions concerning the comparison of the two texts. If there are plausible, or even obvious similarities between two texts, there can be a number of explanations as to why they exist.

A literary approach to this question is taken by Adam Winn, who proposes that Mark has used the Elijah-Elisha cycle as a literary source by means of a creative imitation; an example of the Greco-Roman literary practice of

³⁸¹ Collins, *Mark*, 756 note 230.

³⁸² Collins also observes the kind of irony in 35b, as an irony that “provoke the reader to see beneath the surface of the text for deeper significances”. The quotation is a citation from Jerry Camery-Hoggatt (*Irony in Mark’s Gospel: Text and Subtext*. No. 72. Cambridge University Press, 2005.) in Collins note about the “dramatic irony” used in this verse, as well as 16-20, according to Collins. See Collins, *Mark*, 755 note 227.

³⁸³ Cf. 1:24; 3:11; 5:7; 10:47; 15:39.

mimesis, found in Virgil's *Aeneid* – an imitation of Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*.³⁸⁴ Winn's study of Mark, with regard to method, relies on D. R. MacDonald's study of Mark's Gospel, which according to MacDonald is an imitation of Homer's *Odyssey* and the *Iliad*.³⁸⁵ Winn acknowledges MacDonald's attention to the ubiquitous practice of *mimesis* in ancient literature – and thus the value of this method for New Testament research – and the very strong influence of Homeric epics in antiquity, but disagrees with placing Homer as a primary literary source for Mark.

Van Iersel likewise has a literary approach and describes the intertextual relationship thus: “the author of Mark viewed the Elijah-Elisha cycle as an example that helped him devise a life story of Jesus arranged in episodes”.³⁸⁶ Collins suggests that Mark as a whole, reminiscent of an ancient historical biography, or monography, was based on 1-2 Kgs as a likely “literary model”.³⁸⁷ These literary accounts of the relations between the texts are valid and important, but do not engage the questions about the aim and purpose of the Gospel of Mark in its historical context. Literary eloquence is indeed part of rhetorical persuasion, but Mark was, after all, not just interested in writing a piece of good literature. If the Elijah-Elisha cycle was a key literary source for Mark, why so?

The parallels to the Elijah-Elisha cycle in Mark, particularly visible where questions about Jesus' identity are in focus, should be examined as a crucial clue to Mark's message about Jesus. In an attempt to clarify the Elijah parallels in Mark, Christine Joynes uses the concept “typology”, defined as follows:

Typology is the juxtaposition of types (people, institutions or events). The relationship between type and antitype is suggested by the accumulation of points of correspondence between two narratives. The type and the antitype are not identical and cannot be one and the same person, institution, or event since, by definition, typology is describing one thing in terms of another. The correspondences can be of difference as well as similarity and establishing a typological relationship does not involve evaluation of the historicity of the text.³⁸⁸

³⁸⁴ Winn, Adam. *Mark and the Elijah-Elisha Narrative: Considering the practice of Greco-Roman Imitation in the Search for Markan Source Material*. Pickwick publications, 2010.

³⁸⁵ MacDonald, Dennis Ronald. *The Homeric Epics and the Gospel of Mark*. Yale University Press, 2000.

³⁸⁶ Van Iersel, *Mark*, 65.

³⁸⁷ Collins, *Mark*, 29.

³⁸⁸ Joynes, ‘Returned’, 459.

Joynes concept of Elijah typology targets the literary level, and helpfully points out that, firstly, typology does not assume a one-to-one relation between type and antitype. This means that the type can have more than one antitype, and vice versa. In terms of typology as a literary device, it is nothing incoherent in that both John the Baptist and Jesus are identified as Elijah, in Mark's gospel. Moreover, it is equally coherent that Jesus can assume the role of Elijah, Elisha, Moses, and other literary types, even simultaneously. On the Mountain of Transfiguration, thus, we can find both Elijah typology and Moses typology, and at the same time, these two very figures appear in the story as distinct from Jesus. In other words, Jesus "is" Elijah (and possible also Moses), while also being distinct from Elijah. The correspondence is of difference and similarities, which is clear from the parallels presented above.

The literary approach to typology tends to be suspicious about the historicity of the text, especially when the correspondence is "thick" and too exact.³⁸⁹ But as Joynes points out, the historicity is not determined by the presence of typology, and typology does not constitute a fictional composition.³⁹⁰ Questions regarding Elijah's return, and his role and function in eschatological expectations were very much on the table in the first century, and continued to attract interest in the early church.³⁹¹ As is evident in the gospels, not least in Mark, Jesus' identity in relation to Elijah expectations seemed to be an important issue to address. To put it plainly: the early Jesus-believers were compelled to account for the way in which the prophesy in Malachi was fulfilled by the coming of Jesus as Messiah, and thus to give an account of in what sense Elijah had returned. The testimony in the gospels is, however, not unambiguous on this matter, a fact that is reflected in the lack of consensus in scholarly research about Elijah's role and function in the gospels.

Most would agree that we see between the gospel writers an "Elijanic development".³⁹² J.A.T. Robinson has suggested that according to an early Christology, Jesus was first identified as Elijah, before being seen as Christ.³⁹³ One of the ambiguities about the identity of Elijah that Robertson points to is in the Song of Zacharias in Luke 1:68-79, a canticle originally written by the early church in honour to Jesus, not to Zacharias' son John,

³⁸⁹ See Michael Goulder's definition of typology cited and discussed by Joynes ('Returned', 458).

³⁹⁰ Joynes, 'Returned', 460.

³⁹¹ See e.g. Justin Martyr, *Dialogue*, 49.4; Tertullian, *De Anima*, 35; Origen, *Commentary on John*, 2.31.

³⁹² Hoffeditz, *Prophet*, 4.

³⁹³ Robinson, 'Elijah'.

according to Robinson.³⁹⁴ The likeness in both wording and Christology with Peter's speech in Acts 3 (here "the prophet" refers to Jesus cf. Luk 1:76 and Acts 3:22) strengthen Robinson's case. After Robinson, others have argued that Elijanic typology is used for both John the Baptist and Jesus in Luke's Gospel,³⁹⁵ but also in the Forth Gospel.³⁹⁶ Some conclude that Jesus is depicted as the "New Elijah", and some that the Elijah typology is used to demonstrate that Jesus is greater than Elijah. Regarding the passage of interest here, the transfiguration story, we find after "But I tell you, Elijah has come, and they have done to him whatever they pleased, as it is written about him." (Mark 9:13) an addition in Matthew's version: "Then the disciples understood that he was speaking to them about John the Baptist." (Matt 17:13). This is often interpreted as an explanatory addition, making explicit what Matthew sees as implicit in Mark. The addition in Matthew could however be seen as an alternative view about Elijah's role, and a reflection of a negotiation of a real struggle about the issue during the time the gospels were composed.

The ambiguity about Elijah's role in the gospels probably do reflect some kind of "development" about Elijah's identity in early Christianity, but it is not certain, as Robinson proposes, that "the language of the one who 'goes before the face of the Lord'" had been applied to John the Baptist by the time when the gospels were written.³⁹⁷ It seems to me that the ambiguity exists within the gospels themselves, and in such a way that if the gospel writers wanted to settle uncertainties and dissensions about the typological identity of Elijah by tying it to *one* certain figure, they did not do it very well, at least not Mark. The gospel writers as part of the emerging early Christian tradition had good reasons to connect the coming of a (new) Elijah not only to John, but also, and perhaps especially, to Jesus. This would, however, depend on which of the functions of the Elijah expectations they had in mind, and, also depending on what identity and role they applied to Jesus. Elijah expectations in Jewish literature included, notably, restorer, eschatological priest, and forerunner to Yahweh. As forerunner to the *Messiah*, however, there is very little evidence in Jewish texts, leading some to the conclusion that this is a Christian novelty.³⁹⁸ The restoring motives are the most prominent, evident from the Malachi

³⁹⁴ Robinson, 'Elijah', 280.

³⁹⁵ Miller, Robert J. 'Elijah, John, and Jesus in the Gospel of Luke'. *New Testament Studies* 34.4 (1988): 611-622.

³⁹⁶ Martyn, J. Louis. 'We have found Elijah'. *Jews, Greeks and Christians* (1976): 181-219.

³⁹⁷ Robinson, 'Elijah', 280.

³⁹⁸ So Öhler, Markus. 'The Expectation of Elijah and the Presence of the Kingdom of God'. *Journal of Biblical Literature* 118.3 (1999): 461-476. 463.

context (and directly from 1 Kgs 17-19, and later enhanced in Sirach 48), the scripture most frequently referred to in texts about Elijah expectations. Generally, Elijah appears in Jewish literature often as a role model of zealous and righteous life, and as *the* miracle worker.³⁹⁹

Consequently, if the early Christians, including Mark, were to proclaim, in a Jewish milieu, that “Elijah has come!”, John the Baptist’s missionary work would not be very convincing, especially after his beheading. Jesus, on the other hand, clearly fulfilled the Elianic expectations, and even surpassed them, according to the gospels. But as the belief emerged that Jesus was not only the Messiah, but YHWH incarnated, a forerunner role must be applied to someone other than himself. The ambiguity of the role applied to the Elijah figure in the gospels might reflect a negotiation still not settled by the time the gospels were formed. In Mark – the earliest gospel – we have good reasons to assume that Elijah typology is applied foremost to Jesus.

3.4 Comparison of Literary Structure and Theological Motifs

I now return to the texts. Commentators usually consider Mark 8:27-31 as a turning point or a climax in Mark’s narrative, as the beginning of part two in the story, starting with Peter’s confession.⁴⁰⁰ Mount Hermon and Caesarea Philippi (or its vicinity), is the final point of Jesus’ ministry in the north, and the starting point of the travel to Jerusalem, his final destination. Symbolically, a journey of, and towards, suffering and death (as predicted in 8:31 and at two more occasions along the way), and of recognition of the true messiahship and discipleship.

Since geography matters in Mark, the climactic placing of the events around Caesarea Philippi gives us reason to consider the location as climactic as well. We have reasons to assume that the author controlled and selected geographical details to shape the plot and impact the reader. The destination of the travel is certainly more significant than what a “retreat to the countryside” implies, that could have taken place in any countryside.⁴⁰¹ The explicit location named in Mark 8:27, εἰς τὰς κώμας Καισαρείας τῆς Φιλίππου (to the villages of Caesarea Philippi), is in line

³⁹⁹ Hoffeditz, *Prophet*, 76-77.

⁴⁰⁰ Guelich, *Mark*, xxxvi; Evans, *Mark*, 19.

⁴⁰¹ As France puts it: “So this is not a ‘mission’ to Caesarea Philippi, but a retreat with his disciples in the countryside”. France, *Mark*, 328.

with the Markan Jesus' focus on the villages and the countryside outside cities. It is important here to keep in mind that the rural areas around the city was part of the city itself, controlled by it and integrated with it. In any case, the choice of destination (whether it is a choice of the historical Jesus, or the author of Mark) is in the case of this turning point in the gospel narrative all but random.

Caesarea Philippi, while developed by Herod Philip to a Roman capital city with mainly non-Jewish inhabitants, is nevertheless within the borders of the ideal "All-Israel", and still part of territorial aspirations – a hope to reclaim a Davidic kingdom, stretching "from Dan to Beersheba".⁴⁰² Jesus' visit to the utmost northern point of the ideal Israel can be seen as a symbolic act of "gathering the lost sheep of Israel", and as the awaited Messiah King, restoring the land and conquering the foreign powers.⁴⁰³ As Myers also points out, "It is here in this 'alienated' narrative site—the far north of what could still be considered Palestine, in a region that reflected the Herodian sell-out to Hellenism—that the political narrative proper commences."⁴⁰⁴

Adam Winn proposes that the geographical pattern in Mark reflects the geographical pattern in the Elijah-Elisha narrative, starting in the wilderness of Jordan, then moving to the north where most of the events take place, and then moves to the south where the restoration of the temple is in focus. In 2 Kgs 9-12 the temple is cleansed from false worship of Baal by destruction. In Mark 11, Jesus is symbolically cleansing the temple.⁴⁰⁵ Finally, the Elijah-Elisha cycle ends in the north again, in likeness of the end in Mark where the disciples are told to meet Jesus in Galilee after the resurrection.⁴⁰⁶ According to Winn, the parallels are striking between the geographical orientation of Mark and the Elijah-Elisha cycle, and best explained by his general thesis that Mark used the Elijah-Elisha cycle as a literary model. Even though the geographical similarities are not on a detail level, there are indeed patterns of Jesus' journeys that fit very well with

⁴⁰² See e.g., 1 Sam 3:20; 2 Sam 3:10; 17:11; 1 Kgs 4:25, and 2 Ch 30:50. Dan is situated only 3 km from Caesarea Philippi.

⁴⁰³ Freyne, *Jesus*, 75-80.

⁴⁰⁴ Myers, *Binding*, 216.

⁴⁰⁵ There might in fact have been an actual cleansing of "idols" in Mark 11:15-19. Bill Domeris suggests that the annual half-shekel tax payment, administered in the temple, was paid by Tyrian silver coins (shekel and half-shekel), with the Tyrian Baal-Melkart image struck on the reverse. Jesus' anger towards the moneychangers was thus directed to the recognition of and the image of a pagan deity in the midst of the House of God. Domeris argues that the event in the temple, as well as the transfiguration, ironically implies a struggle against false gods (Baal) and ungodly empires. (Domeris, Bill. 'Reading the Markan Transfiguration (Mark 9: 1-9) in the Light of Jesus' Scattering of the Tyrian Baal Coins'. *Conspectus: The Journal of the South African Theological Seminary* 26.1 (2018): 46-60).

⁴⁰⁶ Winn, *Mark*, 67-68.

Elijah's and (his successor's). Winn's analysis of the transfiguration passage centres around the three passion predictions at different geographical locations, starting at Caesarea Philippi. The question of why the prediction is given three times, and at different locations, is Winn's concern.⁴⁰⁷ Winn finds the same literary pattern in Elijah's prediction of departure given three times to Elisha, in 2 Kgs 2. He concludes:

Elijah's final journey with his disciple Elisha and the predictions of Elijah's departure found in 2 Kings 2, provide the Markan evangelist with the perfect model both for Jesus' final journey to Jerusalem and for introducing Jesus' death.⁴⁰⁸

While this is an interesting and valid observation, strengthening the case for our thesis, Winn surprisingly misses the significance of the mountain-events on Hermon and Carmel respectively, as climactic points in the narrative, and thus fails to give a satisfactory answer as to *why* the events at Caesarea Philippi is climactic in Mark. Peter's confession (at which Elijah's name is mentioned, see Mark 8:28-29), the presence of Elijah on the mountain (9:4-5), and the following discourse on the way down about Elijah's coming (9:11-13), is in Winn's analysis no more than "textual clues by which the Markan evangelist is pointing the reader to one of his primary sources."⁴⁰⁹ The transfiguration itself is not discussed, nor the geographical setting, and even less are any parallels identified with the significant event on Mount Carmel.

I argue that we have here, in fact, a striking parallel between the event on the mountain of transfiguration and the event on mount Carmel. Furthermore, the similar travel pattern observed by Winn, turning from north down to Judea starts, for both Jesus and Elijah, right after the mountain-top event (see 1 Kgs 18:46). Truly, the transfiguration did not take place on Mount Carmel, which would have made the parallel completely explicit, but the geographical setting of the Caesarea Philippi and Hermon area have further similarities with Carmel, not observed by Winn. Carmel as well as Hermon marked the borders of Israel. Fred Woods points out that

Mount Carmel was situated exactly on the border of Israel and Phoenicia. This is useful information, for Jezebel, a zealous advocate of Baal, had advanced the penetration of Baalism into Israel from her homeland in Phoenicia. Perhaps this location was

⁴⁰⁷ Winn, *Mark*, 93

⁴⁰⁸ Winn, *Mark*, 99.

⁴⁰⁹ Winn, *Mark*, 93.

selected because it was the most neutral position for such an encounter between the god of each land.⁴¹⁰

The symbolic function of Jesus' visit to the northern point of ideal "All-Israel", also represented a visit to a religious border area that clearly entailed confrontation with foreign gods. Moreover, several theological motifs in 1 Kgs 18 and elsewhere in Jewish scripture, correspond to the narrative in Mark. Especially the motifs of idolatry, (un)faithfulness, adultery, and fruitfulness of the Land, as I will show.

I contend that YHWH's victory over Baal, and Elijah's victory over the prophets of Baal are symbolically repeated or re-interpreted in the transfiguration on Hermon where Jesus' divine status, his true identity as "Son of God", is proclaimed by the affirmation of the heavenly voice.⁴¹¹ In both narratives, a climactic and triumphal proclamation is made at the mountain, declaring that "The LORD indeed is God" in 1 Kgs 18:39, and Peter's "You are the Messiah" in Mark 8:39. Furthermore, the heavenly voice from the clouds declaring "This is my Son, the Beloved; listen to him!" (Mark 9:7) can be seen as a counterpart of the heavenly "response" to Elijah's prayer and offering (1 Kgs 18:38) where the fire of Yahweh "fell and consumed the burnt offering, the wood, the stones, and the dust and even licked up the water that was in the trench". In both cases, God makes an affirmative response to a faithful servant, over against unfaithful servants, false gods, and false worship. In the Elijah story, Baal is the false god, whereas in the transfiguration story, I claim it is Pan.

I continue this analysis by focusing on theological themes and motives, intersecting with geographical aspects, that will further elucidate and, I think, strengthen my main thesis in this section. As I suggested earlier, religious competition is at play, both in the Carmel and the Hermon event. While "religious competition" is the perspective of the observer (etic), the theological motives at play must be understood from an inside (emic)

⁴¹⁰ Woods, Fred Emmett. *Water and Storm Polemics Against Baalism in the Deuteronomistic History*. The University of Utah, 1991. 131.

⁴¹¹ The tradition (from Origen) locates the transfiguration on Mt Tabor, south-west of lake Tiberias, and at least 80 km from Caesarea Philippi. In line with several commentators (e.g., Edwards, *Mark*, 283; Collins, *Mark*, 421; France, *Mark*, 350), I contend that it is much more plausible that Jesus and the disciples stayed in the area of Caesarea Philippi during the "six days" (9:2), and that Hermon is the implied location in the narrative. If Tabor would have been the mountain where the transfiguration took place, then Jesus and the disciples would have had to travel from Caesarea Philippi (or somewhere near) first to Tabor in southern Galilee (80-10km), and then go halfway back again to Capernaum (9:33). That does not make sense. Even though Mark's interest goes beyond on questions of altitude, it would still be odd to render Tabor (not more than 600 m above sea level) as "ὕψηλόν". The mountain is not mentioned in the text because it is unimportant which mountain it is, but because it is unnecessary for the author to mention it by name, I think. Moreover, by render the mountain "ὄρος ὑψηλόν" the author can more easily weave together the transfiguration story and the story about Elijah on Mount Carmel.

perspective, where, I assume, the question “who is the true God?” is at centre in both texts. To make sense of the transfiguration story in Mark (and of any New Testament text), we need to consider it as a continuation of the traditions represented foremost by the Hebrew Bible, and at the same time, as a reinterpretation of it, in the light of early Christian belief in Jesus as Messiah, in a Greco-Roman polytheistic environment. In our case specifically, what would the Markan story of Jesus going up on mount Hermon to be “transfigured” and affirmed by the heavenly voice as “Son (of God)” signify to the first readers of Mark’s gospel?

The Elijah-Elisha cycle is, according to most scholars, incorporated in the Deuteronomistic history for theological reasons. Elijah’s climactic victory over Baal and the false prophets is the divine judgement over, and answer to, the apostasy and wickedness of Ahab, and most kings before him, starting with Salomon. Thus, we have reason to consider the theological motives in the broader Deuteronomistic and prophetic tradition as an important backdrop to Mark, and as the theological motivation for choosing the Elijah-Elisha cycle as a literary pattern to mimic.

In 1 Kgs 14:23, the narrator complains that the southern Judah also – contrary to the command in Deut 12:1-3 – had “built for themselves high places, pillars, and sacred poles on every high hill and under every green tree”. The story of Elijah’s victory over the false prophets, and by implication, YHWH’s victory over Baal, is the climax of 1 Kings. Here, Elijah as the zealous representative of YHWH, is carrying out precisely the core parenesis in the Deuteronomistic ideology clearly present throughout 1-2 Kings. Elijah, notably, defeats the idol (Baal) and tears down the altar on the high mountain (1 Kgs 18:20-38; 19:10,14), he also feeds the widow (1 Kgs 17:9-16 cf. Deut 26:12-13), and he brings the blessing of rain (1 Kgs 18:41-45 cf. Deut 11:14).

Later in the tradition, in Sir 48:1–14, Elijah’s heroic legacy is intensified, and the redeeming function “to turn the hearts of parents to their children” (v. 10a, cf. Mal 4:8) is combined with “and to restore the tribes of Jacob” (v.10b), a function taken from Isaiah’s redeeming “Servant of the Lord” who will “raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the survivors of Israel; I will give you as a light to the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth” (Isa 49:6). As mentioned earlier, Jesus’ ministry in Mark, his gathering of twelve⁴¹² disciples, and moving around in what a Jewish

⁴¹² The number twelve is important here. Jesus’ disciples are constantly referred to as “the twelve”, a reference to the twelve tribes of Jacob, and thus a symbol of the restoration of *Eretz Israel*. (Cf. also the leftovers “filled twelve baskets” in the feeding story in Mark 6:30-44.)

mind in first century Palestine would consider “All-Israel” or “the remains of the land”⁴¹³, can be seen as a symbolic fulfilment, or inauguration of this prophetic expectation.⁴¹⁴

3.4.1 High Places

An important aspect of the geographical location of the transfiguration is εἰς ὄρος ὑψηλόν (to a high mountain) in Mark 9:2. This designation is more specified than places mentioned earlier in Mark for retreat or solitude (cf. 3:13, 6:46) where τὸ ὄρος expresses a general mountain area. The significance of ὑψηλόν to designate a mountain is more about theology than altitude. In the Hebrew Bible, “mountain”/“hill” (רֶחַל) are almost never predicated, except in the context of idolatry.⁴¹⁵ I argue that this is the case in Mark as well.

A harsh and radical criticism of “high places” (*bamah*) is a very significant trajectory in the Deuteronomistic theology, recurring also in prophetic literature. A *bamah* was in ancient Israel, as far as we can tell from the Hebrew Bible, a natural and/or man-made elevated shrine or sanctuary for worship, operated by a local priest, and apparently in accommodation/syncretism with folk (fertility) cults.⁴¹⁶ In Deuteronomy 12 the people of Israel are given commands regarding the conquering and possession of the land:

These are the statutes and ordinances that you must diligently observe in the land that the LORD, the God of your ancestors, has given you to occupy all the days that you live on the earth. You must demolish completely all the places where the nations whom you are about to dispossess served their gods, on the mountain heights (ἐπὶ τῶν ὀρέων τῶν ὑψηλῶν, LXX), on the hills, and under every leafy tree (ὑποκάτω δένδρου δασέος, LXX). Break down

⁴¹³ The Hermon region was well within the ideal borders of the conquered land (1 Kgs 8:65, Hes 47:15), while Sidon might have counted as “land remaining” (to be conquered), cf. Josh 11:16-17; 13:1-5; 19:28-29. I can not engage in a detailed discussion about borders, actual or idealized, throughout Israel history, but it is clear that the tension between actual and idealized borders played an important part for national identity and the desire to free the land from foreign powers in Second Temple Judaism, evident not least in the Hasmonean expansion and the Jewish revolt/war in 66-73 CE.

⁴¹⁴ Jesus’ journeys to pagan territory are commonly interpreted as a reflection of the gentile mission in the time of the gospel. The question of gentile inclusion in the divine plan of redemption was, however, present before the time of the gospels (cf. Isa 49:6 cited above) and the particular dilemmas for gentile mission of the apostles. Thus, Jesus’ visiting of “pagan” areas, such as Caesarea Philippi, would make sense also as historical events.

⁴¹⁵ Donaldson, Terence. *Jesus on the Mountain: A Study in Matthean Theology*. Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 1987. 30 note 7.

⁴¹⁶ Brueggemann, *Reverberations*, 93-94. The archaeological evidence of the exact nature of these shrines, are scant and open to various interpretations. For our purposes, however, it is the Biblical and in particular the Deuteronomistic history and perception of the *bamah*, that is relevant.

their altars, smash their pillars, burn their sacred poles with fire, and cut down the idols of their gods, and thus blot out their name from their places. (Deut 12:1-3. See also Deut 7:5)

In Deuteronomistic history, the agents, or heroes of this history, notably Josiah and Hezekiah, both effectuate this command.

The natural setting of the idolatry (clearly referring to various fertility cults), high mountains (ἐπὶ τῶν ὀρέων τῶν ὑψηλῶν) and under leafy trees (ὑποκάτω δένδρου δασέος), recur in prophetic judgement of adultery/idolatry, and is often referred to as a Deuteronomistic set-phrase.⁴¹⁷ Also, the names of the false gods should be destroyed. This command is echoed in e.g., Hosea 2:17/19 “For I will remove the names of the Baals from her mouth, and they shall be mentioned by name no more” (καὶ ἐξαρθῶ τὰ ὀνόματα τῶν Βααλιμ ἐκ στόματος αὐτῆς καὶ οὐ μὴ μνησθῶσιν οὐκέτι τὰ ὀνόματα αὐτῶν, LXX) and most notably in Zech 13:2, here as an eschatological formula:

On that day, says the Lord of hosts, I will cut off the names of the idols from the land, so that they shall be remembered no more, and also I will remove from the land the prophets and the unclean spirit.

καὶ ἔσται ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ ἐκείνῃ λέγει κύριος ἐξολεθρεύσω τὰ ὀνόματα τῶν εἰδώλων ἀπὸ τῆς γῆς καὶ οὐκέτι ἔσται αὐτῶν μνεΐα καὶ τοὺς ψευδοπροφήτας καὶ τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἀκάθαρτον ἐξαρθῶ ἀπὸ τῆς γῆς (LXX).

The abolishment of the *names* of the false gods is according to Meyers, “tantamount to denying the existence and potency of the deity represented by the name.”⁴¹⁸ It is notable here that names of pagan gods are remarkably absent in the New Testament, and thus, part of the difficulties of proving any parallels to i.e., Dionysus, Asclepius, or in our case, Pan. The name of

⁴¹⁷ See e.g., Isa 57:5a (παρακαλοῦντες ἐπὶ τὰ εἶδωλα ὑπὸ δένδρα δασέα LXX); 57:7a (ἐπ’ ὄρος ὑψηλὸν LXX); Jer 3:6 (ἐπὶ πᾶν ὄρος ὑψηλὸν καὶ ὑποκάτω παντὸς ξύλου ἁλσώδους LXX); Hos 4:13 (ἐπὶ τὰς κορυφὰς τῶν ὀρέων ἐθυσίαζον καὶ ἐπὶ τοὺς βουνοὺς ἔθυσον ὑποκάτω δρυὸς καὶ λεύκης καὶ δένδρου συσκιάζοντος, LXX). The expression with its variants occurs sixteen times in the Hebrew Bible: 1 Kgs 14:23; 2 Kgs 12:10; 2 Ch 28:4; Isa 30:25; 57:5,7; 65:7; Jer 2:20; 3:6,13; 17:2; Ez 6:13; 20:28; 34:6; Hos 4:13.

For a detailed analysis of the literary dependency and relation of the expressions, see Holladay, William L. ‘On Every High Hill and Under Every Green Tree’. *Vetus Testamentum* 11.1 (1961): 170-176.

⁴¹⁸ Meyers, Carol L. and Eric M. Meyers. *Zechariah 9-14*. Yale University Press, 1998. 369.

the deity is not mentioned in the text, but we might here have a clue as to why this is the case: they ought not to be mentioned.⁴¹⁹

In the synoptic gospels, and in the New Testament in general, ὄρος occurs frequently – often with positive allusions to Israel’s covenantal events – while the combined expression ὄρος ὑψηλόν, however, only occurs in the story of the transfiguration (Mark 9:2 + Matt 17:1), with one or two exceptions: the temptation story in Matthew 4:8 (Πάλιν παραλαμβάνει αὐτὸν ὁ διάβολος εἰς ὄρος ὑψηλὸν λίαν καὶ δείκνυσιν αὐτῷ πάσας τὰς βασιλείας τοῦ κόσμου καὶ τὴν δόξαν αὐτῶν),⁴²⁰ and in Revelation 21:10 (καὶ ἀπήνεγκέν με ἐν πνεύματι ἐπὶ ὄρος μέγα καὶ ὑψηλόν).⁴²¹ In both instances, an adverb is added that somewhat weakens the parallel to the more fixed expression ὄρος ὑψηλόν. In Mark 9:2 the “ὄρος ὑψηλόν” is, I contend, most likely an allusion to the command to abolish false worship, by destroying the places of false worship, foremost “high places”, and under “every spreading/leafy tree”. In the Markan context, ὄρος ὑψηλόν is a most fitting expression to bring the readers mind to both the geographic location of Mount Hermon, and the Deuteronomistic and prophetic theology of idolatry.

It could be objected at this point, that it is easy to recognise allusions to Moses on Sinai in Ex 24, as many interpreters and readers do. For several reasons, however, I argue that these allusions are overstated. Clearly, not only Moses appears with Jesus on the mountain, but Elijah is also there. In

⁴¹⁹ Another reason might be that, given the harsh and often violent control and suspicion exercised by the Roman authorities over the Jews, it is not surprising that polemical rhetoric towards the empire and its deities is subtle rather than outspoken in e.g., Mark’s gospel.

⁴²⁰ It is interesting that the temptation story in Matthew (4:1-11), is elaborated with a scene on a ὄρος ὑψηλόν (λίαν), and with the temptation to get the power over all kingdoms with their glory (δόξα). Throughout the threefold temptations Jesus’ replies with quotations (in typical Matthean manner) from Deuteronomy (8:3; 6:16; 6:13). The context of the quoted verses in Deuteronomy centres around true and exclusive worship of YHWH and prohibition of idolatry, with the promise to inherit the promised land, if obedient. In Deut 12:2, the set-phrase (ἐπὶ τῶν ὀρέων τῶν ὑψηλῶν) is paradigmatic. Thus, it seems that in Matthew’s temptation story, Jesus’ encounter with Satan on a high mountain was understood in the Deuteronomic discourse of true worship and idolatry, and forms a parallel to the transfiguration episode, indicated by the Deuteronomic set-phrase, and the theme of δόξα. Here, Jesus (as in Mark) confronts Satan, holding up against the temptation to avoid crucifixion (seemingly with Peter as instrumental), followed by the ascension and glorification up on the ὄρος ὑψηλόν, where Jesus’ sonship is confirmed by the heavenly voice.

⁴²¹ Rev 21:10 likely alludes to Ez 40:2 (καὶ ἔθηκεν με ἐπ’ ὄρους ὑψηλοῦ σφοδρά, LXX), since both narrates of a prophet (of some sort) being brought up to a high mountain to be shown a city, followed by a description of the vision. In Matthew 4:8-11, Jesus is brought up to a high mountain and being shown “all the kingdoms of the world and their splendour.” There might be an intertextual connection between Ez 40:2, Matt 4:8 and Rev 21:10, sparked by the thematic similarity of someone being brought up to a (very) high mountain and being shown something we could render a “political landscape”, set in a discourse of territoriality. (See Stevenson, Donna L. *The Vision of Transformation: The Territorial Rhetoric of Ezekiel 40-48*. (Phd Diss.) Graduate Theological Union, 1992.) In Ezekiel, the temple vision and the measurements signify a territorial claim and access to the geo-political sphere of the land and the temple of Israel, whereas in Revelation, the future vision of Ezekiel is re-casted as an eschatological future New Jerusalem in which the temple is replaced with God and the Lamb as ultimate rulers (Rev 21:22).

the discourse before the ascension, the reader has just been reminded about Elijah as a suggested answer about Jesus' identity in 8:28, and the discourse following the transfiguration on the way down from the mountain – though admittedly enigmatic – is not about the law or Moses, but about Elijah and his relation to Jesus and the end time restoration of “all things”. The Sinai-theme is not developed here, and the “New-Moses” typology is not evident in Mark, as it is in Mathew.⁴²² In the Sinai Mountain texts in Exodus, the mountain is referred to as simply ὄρος (24:4,12,18; 34:1,3), ὄρος τοῦ θεοῦ (Exod. 24:13), or ὄρος τὸ Σινᾶ (Exod 24:16; 34:2,4), but never as ὄρος ὑψηλόν. Moreover, in Mark's version of the transfiguration, Elijah is anachronistically mentioned before Moses, a peculiarity observed by several commentators as “unusual”, “surprising” or “remarkable”.⁴²³ This also makes it less likely to consider the popular reading of Elijah and Moses on the mountain as representatives of the law and the prophets. Considering the background laid out above, that there is a strong presence of Elijah and Elijah-parallels from the beginning to the end of Marks' gospel, this “surprising” detail is not so surprising.

3.4.2 Unclean Spirits and Panolepsy

The pericope about the exorcism of the unclean spirit, immediately following the transfiguration, reveals theological motifs highly related to the Deuteronomistic and prophetic theology of idolatry examined above. In Jewish traditions, we see a close relation between impure spirits, illness, (moral and ritual) impureness, sin/unfaithfulness, and especially idolatry.⁴²⁴ Defection to false worship, i.e., idolatry and unfaithfulness towards YHWH, is the root cause for exile, submission to foreign powers, and caused the land to be defiled or cursed.

In Zechariah, the eschatological oracle declares the coming day of the Lord (Zech 13:2), and that the Lord himself will remove the false gods, and the impureness caused by the false worship of them. Jesus' ministry in Mark, as YHWH's representative declaring the coming βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ (kingdom/rule of God, Mark 1:15), was also effectuated by Jesus himself by precisely driving out the unclean spirits. Interestingly, this passage in Zechariah is the only instance of the expression τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἀκάθαρτον

⁴²² France, *Mark*, 353.

⁴²³ Lane, *Mark*, 319; France, *Mark* 351; VanIersel, *Mark*, 295.

⁴²⁴ Wassén, Cecilia. ‘The Impurity of the Impure Spirits in the Gospels’ in Tellbe, Mikael and Tommy Wasserman, (eds.), *Healing and Exorcism in Second Temple Judaism and Early Christianity* (Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament/2. Reihe 511), 33-50. Mohr Siebeck, 2019. 35-50.

(the spirit of impurity) in the LXX, an expression used by Mark seemingly interchangeable with δαιμόνιον (demon).⁴²⁵ It is likely that Mark is using this exact expression to allude to the theme of uncleanness, and particularly to the Zechariah context.⁴²⁶ Paul Sloan convincingly elaborates this argument and provides several important parallels.⁴²⁷ Apart from the expression τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἀκάθαρτον, "rebuke" (ἐπιτιμᾶω) is characteristic of Jesus' exorcism (See 1:25; 3:12 and notably 9:25).⁴²⁸ The passage in Zechariah 3:2 "The LORD said to the accuser, 'The LORD rebuke you, O accuser!'" (καὶ εἶπεν κύριος πρὸς τὸν διάβολον ἐπιτιμῆσαι κύριος ἐν σοὶ διάβολε (LXX), Sloan argues, strengthen the parallel between Zechariah and Mark. In Zech 3, τὸν διάβολον is the antagonist of "Joshua" (Ἰησοῦς, LXX), the high priest. In Mark's temptation narrative, Satan is the antagonist, and interestingly, in 8:33, Jesus "rebukes" (ἐπιτιμᾶω) Peter and says "Get behind me, Satan! (ὑπάγε ὀπίσω μου, σατανα). The devil/Satan is in both texts addressed in the vocative. Moreover, Sloan observes that

each passage subsequently refers to Jesus' 'garments', signifying either a new status, or at least a newly recognized status. [...] Thus just as Zech 3:1–5 proceeds from the Lord's 'rebuke' of 'Satan' to 'Jesus' receiving new 'garments,' so Mark 8:33–9:9 proceeds from Jesus' 'rebuke' of Peter, calling him 'Satan', to the 'garments' of 'Jesus' becoming exceedingly white.⁴²⁹

The clean garment of Jesus is contrasted to the unclean spirit in the exorcism after the transfiguration and corresponds to the opening scenes of Mark's gospel where Jesus receives the spirit in the (cleansing) ritual of the baptism in the Jordan River (1:9-11) and the divine affirmation from

⁴²⁵ Both "πνεῦμα τὸ ἀκάθαρτον/unclean spirit" and "δαίμονιον/demon" are used in the synoptics, but "unclean spirit" is significantly more frequent in Mark compared to the other synoptics.

⁴²⁶ Mark is apparently referring and alluding to in several passages in Zechariah, notably in 11:2,7 (cf. Zech 9:9); 14:27 (cf. Zech 13:7); and probably in 11:15 (cf. Zech 14:21). See, de Jonge, Henrik Jan. 'The Cleansing of the Temple in Mark 11:15 and in Zechariah 14:21' in Tuckett, Christopher, (ed.), *The Book of Zechariah and Its Influence*, 87-100. Routledge, 2018. Jonge argues that the final word in Zechariah "there shall no longer be a trader in the house of the Lord of hosts on that day" is echoed in Mark 11:15 where Jesus drives out those who were buying and selling. I think this is not only an echo, but an intended allusion.

⁴²⁷ Sloan, Paul T. *Mark 13 and the Return of the Shepherd: The Narrative Logic of Zechariah in Mark*. Bloomsbury Publishing, 2019. 59ff.

⁴²⁸ According to Sloan, "the term 'rebuke', which possibly derives from Zech 3:2, became the technical term for exorcisms, and the fact that Zech 3:2 itself became an incantation in exorcisms, further supports the case in Mark." Sloan, Mark 13, 66. In general, the corresponding Hebrew root גער normally rendered by ἐπιτιμᾶω in the LXX, is often used as God's subjections of cosmic (powers of waters as chaos powers) or personified enemies, as in Zech 3:2. (Grindheim, Sigurd. 'Exorcism, Forgiveness, and Christological Implications' Tellbe, Mikael and Tommy Wasserman. *Healing and Exorcism in Second Temple Judaism and Early Christianity* (Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament/2 Reihe 511), 53-72. Mohr Siebeck, 2019. 61-63.

⁴²⁹ Sloan, *Mark*, 65.

the heavenly voice “you are my son” (cf. 9:7).⁴³⁰ After the baptism, Jesus’ ministry starts with the confrontation with the evil powers, first Satan in the wilderness (1:12-13), and shortly after, with the unclean spirit in the synagogue (1:23-27).

Likewise, the transfiguration event (9:2-13) is a climactic epiphany, or “apocalyptic moment”⁴³¹ regarding Jesus’ divine status and authority, affirmed to be the chosen representant of YHWH, that is followed by a confrontation with the unclean spirits. Immediately after the transfiguration, Jesus and the three disciples come down (most reasonable) to the city of Caesarea Philippi and meet the other disciples, the crowd, and the boy with an unclean spirit (πνεύματι τῷ ἀκαθάρτῳ, v. 25) rebuked (ἐπιτιμάω) by Jesus.

Throughout Jesus’ ministry in Mark, as Sloan concludes,

a picture emerges where Jesus (and his disciples) accomplish the ‘eschatological ideals’ of that prophetic text [i.e. Zech 12-13:2]. Accordingly, by the power of God’s Spirit, Jesus and his disciples are the agents who perform the task of removing ‘the unclean spirit from the land’.⁴³²

While the baptism and the endowment of the spirit in the opening of the gospel set the stage of Jesus’ battle against the evil powers, the pericopes centred around Caesarea Philippi seems to be the conclusion and the apex of his battle. The exorcism at this northern apex is the last exorcism in Mark’s narrative. In other words, the events in the city of Pan are the geographical apex of Jesus’ ministry to “all-Israel” and at the same time the apex of Jesus’ ministry of rebuking the unclean spirits from the land. Some details about this demoniac suggest that Pan is behind the unclean spirit in question.

The symptoms described in Mark are clearly epileptic symptoms, a disease believed to be caused by a divine visitation, and thus called “the sacred disease”.⁴³³ *Epileptos* (“seized” or “grasped”) is one of many variants of *theoleptos* (seized by a god) that could be caused by nymphs

⁴³⁰ Ched Myers argues (Myers, *Binding*, 211) that 8:27-9:13 is the “second prologue” of Mark, with a thematic symmetry with 1:2-20. Besides the divine voice from heaven, Myers notes the struggle with Satan, the use of “the Way”, the call to discipleship, Peter, James and John, Exodus symbolics, and John as Elijah. This symmetry emphasizes the climactic turning point of the gospel narrative at this point, notwithstanding that I would rather point to “Elianic typology” then “John as Elijah”, as I have argued.

⁴³¹ “The transfiguration is the second of the Gospel’s three ‘apocalyptic moments’, and like the baptism is a legitimating device meant to resituate the story around the new theme.” Myers, *Binding*, 212.

⁴³² Sloan, *Mark*, 64.

⁴³³ Collins, *Mark*, 435.

(*numpholeptos*), Eros (*erotoleptos*), or other spiritual beings.⁴³⁴ Interestingly, the particular case of epilepsy with the symptoms attributed to the possessed boy in Mark, notably the falling/collapsing, and the foaming (ἀφρίζω) from the mouth, indicated in particular *panolepsy*, a possession by Pan.⁴³⁵ The connection between epilepsy and Pan, says Borgeaud, springs out of a

set of common Greek beliefs according to which small livestock (*probata*) and especially goats are particularly subject to the sacred disease. It was generally thought that too much goats' meat and also clothes made of goatskin encouraged the development of this sickness; conversely, and by the logic of homeopathy, epileptics were instructed to sleep on goatskins and to eat the flesh of this animal. It is thus hardly surprising that the goat-god, patron of goatherds and lover of goats, should have some rights with respect to epilepsy.⁴³⁶

It should be noted that the term *panolepsy* is not very common in the ancient sources, and sometimes other symptoms than the epileptic indicate Pan's influence/possession (such as ithyphallicism, or laughter), and there are other deities' seizure that (allegedly) could cause epileptic symptoms. However, in the scene in Mark, taking place in the center of the city of Pan – most probably very near the cave of this deity, such epileptic possession would quite naturally have been seen as a seizure by Pan. Perhaps caused by his anger due to some kind of transgression of the cult, or lack of faithful devotion (by the father?). From a Jewish (and Markan) perspective however, the boy's possession and illness could likely be perceived as caused by (forbidden) worship of Pan. Thus, Jesus' power over the demon might have intentionally implied a competition between Christ and Pan, and simultaneously, Jesus' victory over the idol in this significant northern apex confirms his accomplishment to expel the unclean spirits from the land, in line with the prophetic eschatological promises, and the Deuteronomistic imperative.

⁴³⁴ Borgeaud, *Cult of Pan*, 104.

⁴³⁵ Borgeaud, *Cult of Pan*, 103-108. See also Kulik, 'The Devil', 203. Both refers to Euripides Medea 1167-1175: "For her colour changed, and with legs trembling she staggered back sidelong, and by falling on the chair barely escaped collapsing on the floor. And one old woman among the servants, thinking, I suppose, that a frenzy from Pan or one of the other gods had come upon her, raised a festal shout to the god, until she saw the white foam (ἀφρόν) coming between her lips and her eyes starting out of their sockets and her skin all pale and bloodless." English translation from Kovacs, David. *Euripides vol 1*. Harvard University Press, 1994.

⁴³⁶ Borgeaud, *Cult of Pan*, 104.

3.4.3 Unfaithfulness and Adultery

In prophetic and Deuteronomistic theology, idolatry is often closely related to adultery. In 1 Kings, Ahab's marriage with the Tyrian king Ethbaal's daughter Jezebel (forbidden in Deut 7:3) led to idolatry of Baal, and the height of Israel's wickedness in the Deuteronomistic narrative. The "sins of Jeroboam" became the apostasy and fall of Israel par excellence in subsequent tradition, condemned by several prophets as adultery. Language of adultery is explicitly used for idolatry/unfaithfulness notably in Hosea 3, Ezekiel 16, and in Jer 3 with clear reference to the idolatry of the northern kingdom (Israel). In Jer 3:6 a woman's (Israel) unfaithfulness to her husband (YHWH) is expressed as idolatry: "Have you seen what she did, that faithless one, Israel, how she went up on every high hill and under every green tree, and has committed adultery there." The result of the adultery/idolatry is divorce as stipulated in Deut 24:1-4.⁴³⁷ In Malaki 2:10-16, mixed marriages (like Ahab's) are condemned as unfaithfulness to YHWH. Two verses later (3:1), a promise is made that YHWH will send "τὸν ἄγγελόν μου/my messenger/angel"), cited in the outset of Mark's gospel. The coming judgment on "the day of the Lord" (v.2), includes a verdict against "τὰς μοιχαλίδας/adulteries", v.5).

In the immediate literary context of the transfiguration story in Mark we also find a discourse about faithfulness; to faithfully sacrifice one's life and take the cross as the means of discipleship (8:34-35). In verse 38, Jesus gives a warning about being ashamed for him "ἐν τῇ γενεᾷ ταύτῃ τῇ μοιχαλίδι καὶ ἁμαρτωλῷ/in this adulterous and sinful generation". The term "μοιχαλίδι", literally denoting a person breaking a marital covenant, (as in e.g. Prov 30:20 and Rom 7:3), is unique for the Markan version of this saying, and "no doubt comes from the prophetic image of the relation between God and the people of Israel as a marriage; when people worship other gods, they are accused of 'adultery'", as Collins notes.⁴³⁸ After the transfiguration, in the discourse about the disciples inability to drive out the unclean spirit, Jesus utters a similar expression about "ἐν τῇ γενεᾷ ταύτῃ/in this generation", 9:19) as the one in 8:38, but "μοιχαλίδι/adulterous" is switched to "ἄπιστος/faithless". Here, faithlessness has more the nuance of not believing, perhaps something a modern reader would think of as "scepticism", but faith is in this context (and probably in New Testament generally) not unhooked from

⁴³⁷ *NJBC*, 272.

⁴³⁸ Collins, *Mark*, 411.

faithfulness to the covenant, which included societal regulations about marriage, as well as the exclusive worship of YHWH.

Mark's version of the saying in 9:19 is likely an echo of Deut 32,⁴³⁹ particularly verse 20: ὅτι γενεὰ ἐξεστραμμένη ἐστὶν υἱοὶ οἷς οὐκ ἔστιν πίστις ἐν αὐτοῖς/for they are a perverse generation, children in whom is no faithfulness". Thus, as Collins comments, "'faith' and 'trust' is the key theme in the Markan story".⁴⁴⁰ Collins and other commentators also note the ambiguity about who Jesus is referring to with "this generation"; the scribes, the father, the disciples, or the people watching? In the Markan context, it seems to be the disciples lack of faith that is immediately addressed (in line with the general depiction of the disciples, see 4:40; 6:49ff; 8:17), but Jesus' exclamation about "this generation" in 8:38 and repeated here in 9:19, draws the attention to the theological motif of "faithfulness" at play in the broader context of the transfiguration and the discourse before and after in Mark 8:27-9:29.

Moreover, the author seems to point also to the alluded context of Deut 32:20, in the "Song of Moses" (probably a late insertion in Deuteronomy, "because of the consonance of its theme with Deuteronomic parenesis").⁴⁴¹ It follows the pattern of Deuteronomic theology: as God's chosen people, they are provided with the blessings of the fruitful land (v. 1-14) but forsake YHWH by turning to other gods (15-18), casing YHWH's wrath and judgement (19-21) with consequences for the ecological order of the land, sustaining the people's nourishing and health (22-38). In the end YHWH himself restores his people and cleanses the Land (39-43). The judging verdict over the "perverse generation" in v. 20 is due to the people's apostasy to false gods, as is clear in v. 21 "They made me jealous by what is no god, provoked me with their idols (εἰδώλοις)", and in verse 17 "They sacrificed to demons (δαιμονίοις), not God, to deities they had never known". The same Deuteronomistic pattern follows in 1 Kings, as we saw, with Elijah as YHVH's representative bringing the judgement and destruction of the false worship of Baal with fire that burns even the rocks, as it says also in Deut 32:22 "For a fire is kindled by my anger and burns to the depths of Sheol; it devours the earth and its harvests and sets on fire the foundations of the mountains". The Baal-YHWH polemic is, as in 1 Kgs 18, clearly present in the Song of Moses, evident from the appropriation of Baal's connection to notably dew and rain (Deut 32:2)

⁴³⁹ France, *Mark*, 365; Collins, *Mark*, 437. Hartman, *Markusevangeliet*, 332.

⁴⁴⁰ Collins, *Mark*, 437.

⁴⁴¹ *NJBC*, 108.

and the attribute of lightning as weapon (v. 40-41).⁴⁴² In the context of the transfiguration, Pan would be the obvious counterpart to Baal.

The orgiastic and sexual cultic practises connected to Baal, as well as Pan, were highly offensive in normative Judaism, and probably reinforced the language of “impurity” connected with pagan worship.⁴⁴³ The annual festival of Pan, the Lupercalia, was for long a very popular fertility feast in Rome and Caesarea Philippi (and other places) with orgiastic and sexual rituals, still offensive to the Jews, and obviously a matter of ethical concern for the early Christians.

We have seen that in Jewish scripture, notably in Deuteronomistic history and prophetic literature, unfaithfulness, idolatry, and adultery are interrelated.⁴⁴⁴ In the Markan context of the transfiguration, faithfulness to Jesus is expressed in contrast to an “adulterous” and “unfaithful” generation. Moreover, in Mark 10:1-12, Jesus teaches about marriage and divorce with reference to the commands of Moses in Deut 24:1-4, but with a higher standard of loyalty to the covenant. This passage is part of the teaching about the terms of discipleship, starting from 8:27.⁴⁴⁵ Thus, we have in Mark’s context also the societal and relational dimensions of “faithfulness to the covenant”, interpreted in the light of the confession of Jesus as Messiah. At the same time, the use of the formulation “ἀπὸ δὲ ἀρχῆς κτίσεως/but at the beginning of creation” in 10:6, relates to God as creator and the initial order of creation.

The transfiguration can be hard to fit into the theme of faithful discipleship in 8:27-10:52. However, if an acquaintance with the Hebrew Scriptures in by Mark and his implied addressees is assumed (which it should be), and to the strong allusions to the Elijah-cycle in Mark laid out earlier kept in mind, it is very likely that Jesus’ travel to the area of Caesarea Philippi, ascending the “ὄρος ὑψηλόν”, and the presence of Elijah on the mountain in Mark 9, would recall the Baal-YHWH competition on Mount Carmel, and the theological themes it implied. Altogether, the motifs presented above make a lot of sense as a backdrop to Jesus’ ministry in Mark. The

⁴⁴² For an elaborated argument of the polemic between Baal, particularly the storm and rain god Baal-Hadad, in Deuteronomic history, see Woods, *Water*. Regarding Deut 32, see pp. 54-56. See also Wikander, Ola. *Drought, Death and the Sun in Ugarit and Ancient Israel: A Philological and Comparative Study*. Lund University, 2012. 203.

⁴⁴³ Celebrations in honour of Pan (παννύχαις/παννύχαις) included “seductive music, dancing, drunkenness, sacrifices and libation of wine” (Tzaferis, ‘God who is in Dan’, 133.), and according to Borgeaud “[e]nchanting music, dances approximating animal leaping, drunkenness, erotic excitement – all these joined to fearful cries” (*Cult of Pan*, 172).

⁴⁴⁴ We find the same interrelatedness at several parenetic passages in the NT letters e.g., 1 Cor 6:9; Gal 5:19-21; Eph 5:3-5.

⁴⁴⁵ Hartman, *Markusevangeliet*, 386.

idea of a military conquering of the land is absent in Mark, but the core theological theme of worship of false gods, closely connected to impureness, adultery, and as we shall see, the ecological status of the land, are still present.

3.4.4 Fruitfulness of the Land and Creation Restored

Fruitfulness and fertility of the land were important themes in the Imperial ideology, as well as in the Hebrew Bible. While explicit mentioning of themes relating to nature, ecology, and fruitfulness in the New Testament are rare, it is unlikely that such motifs were irrelevant, especially not in Mark. My premise from the outset is that these matters intersected with geo-political, religious, and ethical concerns, and thus, they relate to the motifs explored above. They are intelligible from the idea of a triangulated relationship – stipulated by the covenant – among Israel, the land, and YHWH as proposed by Marlow and Davis (see 2.3.2). In such thinking, there is a conceptual coherence between creation, natural order, moral order, judgement, and blessings. I hold that we should assume a similar conceptual coherence in Mark. The interrelated motifs sparked by Mark's Elijah-Jesus (and Baal-Pan) typology also imply a discourse about creation; its fruitfulness, fertility, and restoration. The geo-theological significance of Carmel and Hermon can expose such a discourse.

Woods points out that “this very fertile area [Carmel] would have been a great showcase for the fruits of the worship of Baal.”⁴⁴⁶ Moreover, he points to the fact that the Hebrew word Carmel means “garden land” and that Carmel was “used in the Hebrew Bible as an image for fertility as well as beauty”.⁴⁴⁷ Similarly, John Beck analyses the story in 1 Kgs 18 from a narrative-geographical perspective, and points out that the geographical components of water, draught, and the setting of Mount Carmel are significant literary components.⁴⁴⁸ According to Beck: “The lushness of the slopes and its prominent stature combined to give Mount Carmel sacred status [...] and made it an ideal spot to commemorate and influence a rain deity like Baal”⁴⁴⁹ And thus, “Elijah had challenged them [the prophets of Baal] to demonstrate the power of Baal on precisely the piece of ground they presumed to have an advantage.” The geographical setting of natural beauty and fertility makes both Hermon and Carmel natural

⁴⁴⁶ Woods, *Water*, 131.

⁴⁴⁷ Woods, *Water*, 131.

⁴⁴⁸ Beck, John A. ‘Geography as Irony the Narrative-Geographical Shaping of Elijah's Duel with the Prophets of Baal (1 Kings 18)’. *Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament* (124) 17.2 (2003): 291-302.

⁴⁴⁹ Beck, ‘Geography’, 298.

“sacred places” that easily can trigger religious competition concerning who is the god of fertility. It is not surprising that in “Elijah’s Cave” on Mount Carmel, a famous destination of pilgrimage, votive inscriptions have been found to Pan, venerated at this site “under the auspices of Baal Carmel” (see 2.10.2).⁴⁵⁰ This likely provides an(other) example of Baal-worship merging in Hellenistic time with the cult of Pan.

The application of water in the story, Beck observes, is ironically tied to Elijah at several points, but never mentioned in relation to the Baal prophets. “Thus, the author has strategically connected water to the Lord’s representatives while separating it from those who made it their business to bring water to the land, the prophets of Baal”, Beck concludes.⁴⁵¹ The circumstance in which the story plays out is a severe drought and famine, a threat to herds as well as peoples (1 Kgs 18:1-5). We have seen that in the Jewish scriptures, the authors often associated draughts with disease, plagues, captivity, collapse of morality, and idolatry. The diseased boy, and the sins of the woman (1 Kgs 17:17-18) seem to be a consequence associated with the draught, as is the lack of water, food, and pasture (for more obvious reasons).⁴⁵² The root cause of the draught, according to the protagonist in the story, is Ahab’s (and the peoples’) defection to Baal (1 Kgs 18:17-18). Consequently, the duel between Elijah and the prophets of Baal was a demonstration of power: which god was able to send rain – Baal or YHWH? The irony, and the rhetorical punch in the story lies in the futile efforts to wake up Baal, the god of rainfall and water springs, whereas Elijah turns out to worship the true provider of water and rainfall as stated in Deuteronomy (11:11,17; 28:12, 24). The consequence of Elijah’s (or rather YHWH’s) victory over (the prophets of) Baal, is the end of the drought. The episode ends with the manifestation of clouds and rainfall (18:41-45).

The provision of fresh water was a fundamental concern in ancient Israel, and still was in Roman time. The strong polemic between Baal and YHWH, most accentuated in Deuteronomistic history, but present in the Jewish scripture in general, has its background in the new situation for the people of Israel after the Exodus from Egypt and the establishing in the new land of Canaan. As a gift from God, the promised land was given to the people as a blessing, rich and fertile: scarce

⁴⁵⁰ Ovadiah and Pierri. *Elijah’s Cave*. See especially inscription No. 149.

⁴⁵¹ Beck, ‘Geography’, 301.

⁴⁵² Diseases because of drought might for a modern reader be somewhat far-fetched, but clearly, draught causes meagre or failed crops, resulting in less food (fruits, grains, oil, milk, meat, etcetera), and less nutrition that cause weakened immune-system and other bodily mal-functions.

a land with brooks, streams, and deep springs gushing out into the valleys and hills; a land with wheat and barley, vines and fig trees, pomegranates, olive oil and honey; a land where bread will not be scarce and you will lack nothing. (Deut 8:7-9)

The land was thus the means of blessing (or curse), in which the covenant between YHWH and his people was to be embodied. Indeed, the land itself was a co-actor, a “member” in this covenant, whose flourishing (or destruction) was contingent on the people’s fidelity to the covenant and the codes that stipulated the faithful way to relate to the land. The interrelation between faithfulness to YHWH and the fertility of the land is clear.

Moreover, the new land was

not like the land of Egypt, from which you have come, where you planted your seed and irrigated it by foot as in a vegetable garden. But the land you are crossing the Jordan to take possession of is a land of mountains and valleys that drinks rain from heaven. It is a land the Lord your God cares for; the eyes of the Lord your God are continually on it from the beginning of the year to its end. (Deut 11:10-12)

The semi-arid climate of Palestine was, unlike Egypt, dependent on seasonal rainfalls, ultimately out of the people’s control, and often unpredictable. Praying for rain and the giving of rain in its “right time” is a recurring motif in Jewish Scriptures. However, water and weather – and thus the land’s fruitfulness – was for the Canaanites controlled by Baal. As immigrants to Canaan, the people of Israel were confronted with a people worshipping a deity with the claim to control the sky. This raised the question of YHWH’s omnipotence.

In Mark 9, neither water nor draught is explicitly mentioned in the text. However, the cloud in v.7 might have recalled the presence of YHWH in the form of a cloud (as in Ex 13:21; 24:15-18; 40:34-37 and 1 Kgs 8:10-11). In the geographical context of Hermon, recalling the Elijah-Baal controversy concerning draught and lack of rain, the cloud in Mark 9:7 might have recalled more precisely God’s power to provide the rain at Hermon that was the source of the water for the Jordan River, and thus the ultimate source of life in the Jordan and Galilean watershed. Thus, a water polemic might still have been implied in Mark 9. In other passages in Mark, Jesus controls water and weather, reminiscent of Elisha in 2 Kgs 2:6-8 (note that it was the Jordan River!). The water spring at the foot of Mount Hermon providing the Jordan River with “perfectly pure” water, on

which fertility and the general livelihood in Galilee were dependant, had its (perceived) fountainhead right at the cave of Pan in Paneas/Caesarea Philippi, as we saw.

Considering the importance of cultural and natural landscape in the discourse, specifically the well-recognized water spring and the lush verdure at the *Paneion* and the Hermon region in general, we can suppose that the geographical setting implied discursive arguments regarding water provision. Baal was depicted as ruler of the waters, both on, and beneath the earth (underground springs).⁴⁵³ Pan's association with springs was commonplace.⁴⁵⁴ Jesus' travels and gathering of the twelve disciples certainly had a symbolical function of a re-claiming of the promised land, and a restoration of the twelve tribes in a renewed covenant.⁴⁵⁵ Thus, Jesus' travel to Hermon and the source of the Jordan River,⁴⁵⁶ controlled by pagan rulers and a deity known for his association with water sources and fertility suggests a water polemic, or at least one aspect of the land-polemic at Hermon.

20th century scholarship has mainly emphasized the *difference* between YHWH and Baal, pointing to the fundamental contrast of YHWH as creator *outside* creation, while nature-gods like Baal is a force *within* nature. YHWH is seen as God of (salvation-)history, while Baal was understood as controlling natural processes. However, more recent research has observed the many similarities of function between YHWH and Baal. Brueggemann states that

While the radical 'either/or' option of YHWH or Baal has a strong basis in the texts noted above [Judg 6:25-32; 2 Kgs 10; 23:4-5], the interpretive climate has changed in more recent decades to show that YHWH, in Old Testament articulation, is in fact a lot like Baal and shares many of the same functions: YHWH also is a storm God (as in Ps. 29), a mighty warrior against the powers of death (as in Exod. 15), and a fructifier of the earth (Hos. 2:14-23) who gives rain and causes agriculture to flourish as the earth yields the blessings of life and well-being, and who orders the rhythms of nature to assure viable life for all creatures (Gen 1:1-2:25; 8:22; Pss. 104:27-28; 145:15-16; Isa 55:12).⁴⁵⁷

⁴⁵³ Woods, *Water*, 144.

⁴⁵⁴ Wernicke, Konrad, 'Pan' in W.H. Roscher, (ed.) *Ausführliches Lexicon der Griechischen und Römischen Mythologie* (Liepzig: Teubner, 1897-1902) 3/1:1347-1406. 1390-1395.

⁴⁵⁵ As argued by e.g., Freyne, *Jesus*, 74-91, and Horsley, *Jesus and Empire*, Ch 5.

⁴⁵⁶ Note that earlier in the gospel, Jesus was announced as the "beloved son" by the heavenly voice, standing at the Jordan River.

⁴⁵⁷ Brueggemann, *Reverberations*, 16.

In other words, YHWH was recognized as God of fertility, in competition with Baal.⁴⁵⁸ The context of Mark's gospel is not entirely different, I hold. As I have tried to show, Mark's narrative seems to build on several theological motifs (idolatry, faithfulness, adultery, and fertility), and the geographical location of Paneas/Caesarea Philippi with its political, cultic, and natural geographical significance, recalls the competition between Baal and YHWH in the Deuteronomistic history. In New Testament time, the people of Israel likely saw themselves in a similar situation of religious pluralism as in the times of the Deuteronomistic history and the prophets. While Baal worship likely had faded out, new deities and new cults had emerged, but with very similar functions. Still in an agrarian society, the fruitfulness of the land was a matter of life and death, and still an issue integrated in theology, both for Jews and the surrounding Greco-Roman world. As Sean Freyne observes, Hermon as the source of Jordan, had "ecological importance for Galilean life", and "[d]ew from Hermon had both spiritual and material significance for Galilean Jews, and their belief in the creator God as the giver of such blessings meant that the two aspects were inextricably bound together."⁴⁵⁹

In the discourse about Elijah, while descending the mountain, Jesus says in 9:12a that "Ἡλίας μὲν ἐλθὼν πρῶτον ἀποκαθιστάνει πάντα/Elijah does come first to restore all things". Here, Mark's Jesus alludes to what Malaki says about the effect of Elijah's return, that he will restore the hearts (ἀποκαταστήσει καρδίαν, Mal 3:23 LXX), but expands it to a more universal scope, to say that he will restore all things (ἀποκαθιστάνει πάντα).⁴⁶⁰ This signals an apocalyptic discourse about an eschatological expectation of a restoration of all creation.

Given the common attribution of (τὰ) πάντα and similar expressions to denote Pan's role as universal god of nature, and the geo-theological setting of the scene, ἀποκαθιστάνει πάντα in 9:12a might well allude to Pan, the patron deity of this area. The universal language with the common wordplay on πᾶν in numerous descriptions and exhortations to Pan (see 2.11), likely also taken up in Ben Sira 43:27 identifying Pan with YHWH and giving YHWH the epithet "τὸ πᾶν ἐστὶν αὐτός" earlier in Jewish tradition, increases the plausibility.

The religious competition at Caesarea Philippi thus suggests a polemic regarding the question of who is the true giver of water, fruitfulness, and

⁴⁵⁸ On the YHWH-Baal theme in Hosea, see also Marlow, *Prophets*, 170-171.

⁴⁵⁹ Freyne, *Jesus*, 160.

⁴⁶⁰ Collins, *Mark*, 430.

ultimately, of life. Pan, as god of all nature and fertility, and as patron-god of this area, would have naturally been regarded as the life-giving force behind its fertility and prosperity. Jesus' symbolic actions at Caesarea Philippi can be seen as a counter discourse and a precursory re-appropriation of the ecological significant area of Caesarea Philippi as the fountainhead of Jordan, the source of livelihood in Galilee. If the coming of the kingdom/rule of God entailed an ecological dimension – a blessing of the land, as it does in the prophetic eschatological visions, it makes sense that Mark's Jesus as representant of the Creator "reclaims" (symbolically) this place as its true ruler over against its political and spiritual powers (between which there were no clear distinction). In other words, Jesus trumps Pan on his home turf. This has a cosmological and eschatological dimension that deserves a section of its own.

3.5 Revelation and Cosmic Battle: Hermon in Jewish Apocalyptic Tradition

This far, I have suggested that Mark presents Jesus as a new Elijah, drawing from the Deuteronomistic History, and later developments of Elijah expectations in Second Temple Judaism. In addition, the geographical setting of the transfiguration on Mount Hermon, has significance in the matrix of Jewish apocalyptic and eschatological traditions.

The mountain has a long religious tradition, as we have seen, and played a considerable role as the location for revelations. In 1 Enoch 6, a reinterpretation of Genesis 6-9, the author recounts the myth of the rebellious watchers who conspired to descend to earth and have intercourse ("defiled themselves", 1:7) with the daughters of men (6:1-7). Most interestingly, the descent was explicitly made "onto the peak of Mount Hermon" (6:6). In 13:7-9, geographic references are made to "the waters of Dan in the land of Dan, which is south of Hermon, to the west", the place where Enoch receives his heavenly vision and commission to go to "Abel-Main, which is between Lebanon and Senir [i.e., Mount Hermon]" where Enoch in the role of a prophet announces judgement over the fallen watchers. According to Nickelsburg, these precise geographical references to Upper Galilee "set the narrative of the angelic rebellion, Enoch's interaction with the watchers, and his ascent to heaven in a specific, well-defined geographic locale."⁴⁶¹ Since Jerusalem in general is the

⁴⁶¹ Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch*, 239.

geographical centre in 1 Enoch, “it is striking”, according to Nickelsburg, that this northern territory and shrines – despite its status as denounced – has been given a status as a sacred location of visionary revelation in this text. The accurate locations indicate first-hand familiarity and a “tradition of northern Galilean provenance”, Nickelsburg suggests.⁴⁶² On the basis of the typology of *Urzeit* and *Endzeit*, he propose that the primordial sins of the angels have its counterpart in the authors real world, in 1 Enoch a defiled priesthood in Jerusalem. In the *Testament of Levi*, Nickelsburg observes strong similarities in detail to 1 Enoch and notes that both texts locate a visionary heavenly ascent to Mount Hermon or in close relation to Hermon (Dan), where the patriarch receives a commission to priesthood⁴⁶³ and the mission to execute/declare a judgement/vengeance upon the watchers/Shechem/Jerusalem priests for their sexual sins. This suggests that a “tradition of visionary activity around Dan and Hermon was a tenacious one” and has “numerous points of contact with the N.T.”, according to Nickelsburg.⁴⁶⁴

The obvious parallel is to the location of Paneas/Caesarea Philippi and the events related to this area in the gospels. Matthew’s gospel places Peter’s confession close to Caesarea Philippi (Matt 16:13) and describes it as a revelation (ἀποκαλύπτω, v.17). Peter is commissioned to be the “rock” (πέτρα) on which Christ will build his church (ἐκκλησία), over which the gates of hell (πύλαι ᾗδου) will not prevail, and gets the authority to bind (δέω) and lose things in heaven and on earth (v.18-19). The polarity between the heavenly realm and the earthly recalls the heaven/earth polarity in 1 Enoch and Testament of Levi. A priestly and mediating role seems to be given to Peter in the gospel of Mathew.⁴⁶⁵ Peter’s role (as mediator and “high priest” of the new covenant) seems to be accentuated in Matthew’s account, where Peter has a somewhat more prominent role in general, and the ecclesiological issues are in focus.

In Mark, however, Peter’s confession is not elaborated as in Matthew, and the disciples are generally depicted as ignorant. Parallels between the events around Caesarea Philippi in Mark’s narrative and the Mount

⁴⁶² Nickelsburg, George WE. ‘Enoch, Levi, and Peter: Recipients of revelation in upper Galilee’. *Journal of Biblical Literature* (1981): 575-600. 585-6, 599.

⁴⁶³ Obvious in *T. Levi*, but implied in *1 Enoch* in his role as intercessor for the watchers, and the allusions to e.g., Ezra and his role as priest. See Nickelsburg, ‘Enoch’, 589 for his detailed analysis, on which I depend.

⁴⁶⁴ Nickelsburg, ‘Enoch’, 589-90. Suggested also by several other scholars.

⁴⁶⁵ Nickelsburg, ‘Enoch’, 596. See also Fornberg, Tord. ‘Peter - The High Priest of the New Covenant?’. *Far East Asia Journal of Theology* 4 (1986): 113-21. Fornberg argues that (the final redactor of) Matthew presents Peter as a counterpart or successor to the high priest, based on the priestly references in the Enoch – Levi tradition.

Hermon tradition in 1 Enoch and other Jewish apocalyptic texts can still be drawn. In general, it should be kept in mind that early Christology and eschatology were highly influenced by Jewish apocalyptic texts, not least 1 Enoch. In Mark in particular, the “son of man” Christology derives from Daniel 7, but more likely, as Nickelsburg points out, from an interpretation of Dan 7 in 1 Enoch 62-63.⁴⁶⁶ The cosmic dualism, mentioned above in relation to Peter’s confession/commission in Matthew, is clearly at play also in the transfiguration story in Mark. Jesus’ rebuking of Peter, addressing him as “Satan”, reminds the reader of the superhuman dimension and conflict behind Peter’s humane misunderstanding.⁴⁶⁷ On the mountain, shortly after, the two heavenly beings (Elijah, and Moses), suddenly appearing with (and speaking with) Jesus, are juxtaposed with the earthly figures (Peter, James, and John). Jesus’ white garments indicate (as in apocalyptic visions, e.g., Dan 10:5; 1 Enoch 14:20; 62:15C; 2 Enoch 22:8-10 cf. Mark 16:5; Rev 3:4f; 7:9) a belonging to the heavenly sphere, as opposed to garments *on earth* (Mark 9:3).⁴⁶⁸ The appearance of the heavenly voice (a commonplace in apocalypses) from the clouds (cf. Dan 8:16; 1 Enoch 13:8; T. Levi 18:6), is suddenly followed by a shift back to normal earthly reality (v.8). Clouds, as well as the strike of fear,⁴⁶⁹ and snow is featured also in Enoch’s vision (1 Enoch 14).⁴⁷⁰ While the scene does not take place *in* heaven, as in apocalyptic visions, the mountain itself represents a gate to heaven, a place where heaven and earth meet. In his dissertation on the transfiguration, Simon Seung-Hyun Lee aptly comments:

⁴⁶⁶ Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch*, 82-83.

⁴⁶⁷ France, *Mark*, 83-84.

⁴⁶⁸ Note that in Mathew’s and Luke’s versions, Jesus’s *face* is shining, not only his clothes, as in Mark. This suggests that the former accounts are modelled to fit a Moses-typology that is not in the forefront in Mark’s account, as I have argued earlier.

⁴⁶⁹ The remark in 9:6 that the disciples “became terrified” (ἐκφοβοῖ γὰρ ἐγένοντο) might point to an allusion to Pan. As commonly acknowledged by scholars of Mark, a significant feature of this gospel is reactions of fear, amazement, wonder, and the like, seemingly to create a juxtaposition between faith on one hand and fear, lack of comprehension or perception, and confusion on the other, especially of the disciples, but also among “the crowd”. Reactions of fear is mainly caused by Jesus’ presence/appearance, his miracles/exorcisms, and his teaching (See, Dwyer, Timothy. ‘The Motif of Wonder in the Gospel of Mark.’ *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 17.57 (1995): 49-59; and Stacy, Robert Wayne. *Fear in the Gospel of Mark*. (Phd diss.) *The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary*, 1979.) A variety of terms with similar connotation is used throughout the gospel, but ἐκφοβος is used only at 9:6 in Mark, and only at one more occasion in the New Testament. φοβεομαι occurs in 4:41; 5:15; 5:33, 36; 6:20, 50; 9:32; 10:32; 11:18, 32; 12:12; 16:8. In this geographical setting, and given the other connections to Pan, the struck of fear (here intensified) could easily spark allusions to this feature of Pan, who was known to cause a strike of fear by his sudden appearance. The φοβεομαι in 5:15, and perhaps 4:41 and 6:50 might also allude to Pan (see 5.2.3), but less likely at other occurrences.

⁴⁷⁰ Snow is not mentioned in Mark, but implied in the setting on Hermon, known for its peak covered with snow most of the year. Clouds are also featured in Dan 7:13 and Rev 14:4.

The cosmic mountain includes the idea of the mountain as the *axis mundi* with its roots in the underworld and its peak in the heavens; it is the place where heaven, earth, and underworld are linked together. Likewise, in our story of the Transfiguration [Mark 9:2-10], it is on the mountain that both the heavenly beings and the earthly beings meet with one another.⁴⁷¹

In Jewish apocalyptic literature, the idea of a cosmic mountain is incorporated into traditional Zion-theology, which placed great emphasis on the temple mount as the sacred mountain, or “God’s mountain”.⁴⁷² A general pattern of detaching mountain-symbolism from mount Zion and applying it to other significant mountains occurs in Jewish apocalyptic traditions, like the role given to Hermon in 1 Enoch above. Later in 1 Enoch, cosmic mountain symbolism and eschatological motifs are applied to unspecified mountains (1 Enoch 17:2; 18:6-8; 24:2-25:7). Recurring motifs in apocalyptic mountain symbolism are the mountain as a revelatory site, as a gate to heaven, the throne of God, a place for the eschatological gathering of the scattered people, a place for portents of a coming judgement, and the coming of the kingdom.⁴⁷³ Different mountains are given significance according to different (local) traditions. Mount Gerizim in Samaria, as an example, was perceived by the Samaritan tradition to be the sacred mountain (John 4:20) and the navel of the earth, while also having historical significance in the main tradition (Deut 11:29; 27:12; Josh 8:33). So also Hermon, with its historical significance in Jewish history and scripture, likely enjoyed a special importance and sacredness to local communities living with the mountain in view.

Thus, Nickelsburg’s suggestion that the tradition of visionary and revelatory activity at the Hermon/Dan area reflects first-hand familiarity with northern Galilee, is very much on point. This tradition tied to this location might well be reflected in the gospel accounts of the transfiguration (and Peter’s confession) and in later Petrine tradition indicated in 2 Pet 1:16-18. Possibly also the account in Acts 9:1-9 of Saul/Paul’s revelation on the road to Damascus (passing Caesarea Philippi) is tied to this tradition, according to Nickelsburg.⁴⁷⁴ Stephen Harr tentatively suggests that “disciples were made from among the villages (or dormitory suburbs) of Banias, even during the visit of Jesus and the

⁴⁷¹ Lee, Simon S. *Jesus’ Transfiguration and the Believers’ Transformation: A Study of the Transfiguration and its Development in Early Christian Writings*. Vol. 265. Mohr Siebeck, 2009. 27.

⁴⁷² Donaldson, *Jesus on the Mountain*, 51-69.

⁴⁷³ For an elaborated analysis, See Donaldson, *Jesus on the Mountain*, Ch. 5, especially 71-83.

⁴⁷⁴ The story of Saul’s commissioning (and Peter’s in Matt 16:13-20) “have much in common with 1 Enoch 14”, says Nickelsburg (*1 Enoch*, 246).

Twelve.”⁴⁷⁵ Based on “available evidence” and the fact that Banias is situated on the road between two centres of early Christianity – Tyre and Damascus – suggests “a continuing Christian presence in the Banias region from the earliest days of Christianity, a community which interacted with communities responsible for the gospels”, says Haar.⁴⁷⁶ He also proposes that 2 Peter uses tradition stemming from Peter’s missionary activities from Banias. Nickelsburg shows that God’s punishment of the angels in 2 Pet 2:4 (“cast them into hell and committed them to chains of deepest darkness to be kept until the judgment/σειραῖς ζόφου ταρταρώσας παρέδωκεν εἰς κρίσιν τηρουμένου”), is taken from the Enoch tradition of the punishment of the watchers (borrowing from Jude, who quotes 1 Enoch). Together with the “gates of hades/πύλαι ᾗδου” and the binding and losing in Peter’s commission in Matthew 16:18-19 suggest a polarity that corresponds to the geography of Mount Hermon. Nickelsburg comments that “The image of the rock calls to mind the rocky crags in the environment of the *Paneion*, and the reference to the gates of Hades finds its counterpart in the subterranean waters of the grotto.”⁴⁷⁷

It is likely that the narratives centred around Mount Hermon in the first and second gospels, as well as the elements in 2 Peter discussed above, are influenced by apocalyptic traditions about the Hermon region, especially 1 Enoch, and originated and developed in the area itself by local communities. The different New Testament authors, however, drew from this tradition different motifs depending on their over-all rhetorical focus and general narrative patterns. A further elaboration of the employment of the Hermon narratives in Matthew and 2 Peter (as well as Luke and other early Christian uses of this tradition) goes beyond the limit of this research. As I suggested earlier, however, Matthew seems to have Peter’s commission in sight, whereas in Mark, the Caesarea Philippi cycle is fitted into other clusters of motifs and narrative frameworks. Being a place for the origin of the demonic world and the defilement of the Earth, it is likely that Mark draws from the Enochic traditions of the events at Hermon, given the strong attention Mark gives to the demonic world and the cosmic battle between Jesus and the demons/unclean spirits.

⁴⁷⁵ Haar, Stephen. ‘Physical and Cultural Landscape in 2 Peter: Implications for Audience, Author and Context’. *Lutheran Theological Journal* 46.3 (2012): 208-221. 213. (Stated by Haar as a rhetorical question.)

⁴⁷⁶ Haar, ‘Physical and Cultural’, 213. Wilson argues in similar line and suggests that the stories centred around Caesarea Philippi in Mark stems from sources earlier than Mark (“Ur-Markus”), originated from local Jewish-Christian traditions (Caesarea Philippi, 78-79).

⁴⁷⁷ Nickelsburg, ‘Enoch’, 598.

I have argued that the emphasis on narrative-geographical aspects of Mark's gospel places the events around Mount Hermon/Caesarea Philippi in a highly important location in several regards. Geo-politically as the northern apex of the ideal All-Israel, or the "remains of the Land", and as a counterpart to Mount Carmel – the location of the central Baal-YHWH polemic/contest in Deuteronomistic history. I have highlighted several motifs from Jewish scriptures that correspond to the wider literary context of Mark's transfiguration account: the high places/ὄρος ὑψηλόν (idolatry), unclean spirits, adultery (sexual transgression), and the motif of fruitfulness and its ecological dimensions. To a large degree, these motifs recur in the apocalyptic literature as well, notably in 1 Enoch.

At heart of 1 Enoch is God's coming judgement over sin and evil powers. The origin of sin is narrated in the Book of the Watchers, where the heavenly watchers revolt against God and descend to earth (on Mount Hermon) to have intercourse with the daughters of man, from which the giants were born. The watchers then taught the sons of man "sorcery and charms" (7:1) and began to "reveal to them the cutting of roots and plants" (7:1). The giants started to devour the son of man, due to their violence and gluttony, and "sin against the birds and the beasts and creeping things and the fish" (7:5) resulting in the earth bringing "accusation against the lawless" (7:6). The angel Asael then taught men to make instruments of war from iron (8:1), knowledge that led to the desolation of the earth. Men were also taught spells and magic, and to interpret signs of cosmic bodies (8:3). In Enoch 10, Asael is depicted as the chief villain for all sins and the desolation of the earth. He is judged to be thrown into the wilderness, bound (δέω) and cast into a dark pit to lay on "sharp rocks and jugged stones". This myth recalls the Jewish tradition from Leviticus 16, of the scapegoat thrown into the desert, and seems to be recalled in Mark's depictions of the binding of Satan (3:27), and the Gerasene demoniac (5:3-4), as we will see in chapter 5.

The consequences of and judgement over the sins in 1 Enoch 10 – modelled after the Noah story in Gen 6-9 – anticipates both universal destruction (10:2; 16a; 20; 22) and is paralleled with a promise of a new beginning, cleansing of the earth, and a blessed life in peace and righteousness (10:7; 16b; 21; 11:1-2). Righteousness and the order of creation are reflected in agricultural fertility and abundance:

Then all the earth will be tilled in righteousness, and all of it will be planted with trees and filled with blessing [...] They will plant vines on it, and every vine that will be planted on it will yield a

thousand jugs of wine; and every seed that is sowed on it, each measure will yield a thousand measures; and each measure of olives will yield ten baths of oil. (1 Enoch 10:18-19)

Of special interest for my study is that the reversal of the damage made by the giants (originally due to the transgression of the rebellious angels) is through a renovation of the earth and its inhabitants, expressed in language of fecundity and fertility. Modelled after the postdiluvian time of Noah (Gen 8:16-9:20) that forms a prototype for the coming eschatological renewal of the earth, in language borrowed from Isa 65-66. Nickelsburg comments:

As Noah tilled the soil and planted a vineyard after the flood (Gen 9:30), so in the last times the earth, devastated by the giants (7:3), will be covered with vegetation, so that the righteous can eat the crops they plant (Isa 65:21-22; cf. 1 Enoch 11:1). Because the earth is tilled by the righteous (this seems to be the meaning of v 18a), God's blessing, in the form of earth's fecundity, will follow [...] the fantastic yields described in v 19 are of miraculous proportions, and are appropriate to the perfection of the eschaton.⁴⁷⁸

As Nickelsburg points out, righteousness and fertility of the earth goes hand in hand in Isaiah (e.g., 45:8; 61:11), but as we have seen, it is part of a theological pattern and a cluster of motifs recurring in Jewish traditions. The idea of a new creation, and the restoration of the earth (drawn especially from Isa 65-66) is a major theme in 1 Enoch and colours "almost all parts of 1 Enoch", Nickelsburg points out.⁴⁷⁹ These issues have their analogy in the cosmic sphere, governed by God's order instituted at creation. Sin is violation against God's cosmic order and his laws and leads to victimization of humans and violation of the earth. Humans are also responsible for sins. The order, stability and obedience of cosmic bodies, seasons, weather, and the leaves of the trees etc are juxtaposed with humanity's unfaithful disobedience (2:1-4).⁴⁸⁰ The sexual transgression of the angels mirrors the priestly violation of sexual codes and the defilement of the cult.⁴⁸¹ Sins also includes idolatry: "Again I swear to you, sinners, [...] those who worship phantoms and demons (δαίμονιοι) and abominations and evil spirits" (99:7). The Deuteronomic command to expel the idols from the land/high places (Deut 12:2-3) repeated in the

⁴⁷⁸ Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch*, 227.

⁴⁷⁹ Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch*, 57.

⁴⁸⁰ Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch*, 38, 51.

⁴⁸¹ Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch*, 46-47, 54.

prophets (e.g., Mic 1:7; Zech 13:2) is taken up in 1 Enoch (“And all the idols of the nation will be given up; and the towers will be burned with fire. And they will be removed from all the earth”, 91:9a).

In its historical context, 1 Enoch like other apocalyptic texts arose in a situation of oppression and despair and reflects a yearning for God’s intervention and judgement over the oppressive powers in a specific historical circumstance. Human activity in the present is seen in terms of the past – going back to primordial time – and in terms of the eschatological future. The myths and visions do not merely express a metaphorizing and symbolizing of historical reality, but rather they present a worldview in which the spiritual and cosmic realm corresponds to earthly life. Eschatological judgement has a spatial dimension set in the cosmic sphere. “[C]osmology undergirds eschatology”, says Nickelsburg; “God has structured the cosmos (‘prepared’) the places that guarantee the reality of the coming judgement and its rewards and punishments. Thus, God’s creation anticipated the judgement and serves as its instrument.”⁴⁸²

In other words, while a dualism between the defiled earthly sphere and the holy transcendent heavenly sphere, and between the present time and the time to come, is clearly featured in 1 Enoch, as it is in apocalyptic literature in general, the dualism is not absolute. Rather, the temporal and spatial dimensions float together into a reality in which the temporal and spatial forms an organic unity.⁴⁸³ The earthly present life is not uninteresting for the author, nor does the text seem to promote a complete escapism where the hope for a future spiritual existence is the only thing in sight. In its historical context, the message is addressed to, and likely triggered by, earthly matters (oppression and persecution by gentile rulers, social conflicts, and other crisis) in the present, mirrored in the text. Geographical places are often fictional and unnamed, but the mythical geography is not unhooked from real places, such as Jerusalem, Sinai, and notably the Hermon/Dan region. The descent of the angels on Hermon is not accidental, and if (parts of) 1 Enoch was composed in this area, as suggested, we should pay attention to the historical situation and geography of this place.

Nickelsburg pays a great deal of attention to the Pan-cult in this area, it’s environment of woods and springs fitting the myths of Pan. “Pan’s

⁴⁸² Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch*, 39.

⁴⁸³ Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch*, 38.

association with female spirits [i.e., nymphs] and his other amorous escapades raise an interesting question”, says Nickelsburg:

Is it coincidental that the story of the Watchers and the women is set in a geographical location that is also connected with a god known for his sexual misadventures?

and further:

the similarities between the myths of the Watchers and of Pan suggests a broader question: How might the people of this area have thought about them in relation to one another?⁴⁸⁴

Nickelsburg thus observes the thematic similarities between Pan’s violent sexual passion, and the lust of the watchers in 6:1-7. From a Jewish/Christian perspective, the Hermon area was in New Testament time most likely associated with defilement of the land/earth not only due to its history of apostasy and sexual misconduct from the times of Jeroboam and Jezebel, but evident also in Roman time when Pan had been promoted to the patron-god of the region’s capital, and honoured at festivals (likely including orgiastic practices), in rituals and offerings, and worshiped at an impressive sanctuary together with the Caesar. The cult of Pan at this place goes back to at least 198 BCE, and the victory of Antiochus III, as already noted, and thus existed when 1 Enoch was composed/redacted. The importance of the sacred geography of the Hermon area suggests that the author/redactor knew it well and would also have been well familiar with the cult of Pan, as well as with the connection between Pan and the Hellenistic rulers. Nickelsburg’s question about how people living in the area of Hermon would have thought about the similarities between the myths of the Watchers and of Pan, is equally relevant in relation to the transfiguration story in Mark.

If the gospel narratives centred around this area reflect the tradition in 1 Enoch – probably with its provenance in geographic proximity to Hermon, and in continuation with later Hermon traditions (2 Peter) – we have reasons to assume that the Pan cult was a significant part of the cultural context of the gospel tradition. Nickelsburg, Haar, and Wilson suggest that Matthew most clearly reflects this tradition, focusing on the revelatory aspect of Peter’s commissioning. Considering other traits of similarities, however, the gospel of Mark is at least as relevant. Mark’s focus on narrative geography, its apocalyptic flavour (Mark 9:2-10; 13:14-27), its focus on clean and unclean (spirits), the demonic world, and the cosmic

⁴⁸⁴ Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch*, 245.

dimensions of his narratives, fit well with the traits in 1 Enoch. The main theme of eschatological judgement and a coming restoration of creation seen in 1 Enoch seems to be implied in Mark's gospel as well, including the Caesarea Philippi cycle. Mark presents Jesus as the Son of Man (2:1-12, 28; 8:38; 9:9-12; 10:33, 45; 13:26) and the Son of God (1:11; 3:11; 5:7; 9:7; 15:39). Notably in the context of the transfiguration, Mark uses elements from apocalyptic ideas about a heavenly messianic figure and conflates Son-of-Man and Son-of-God traditions (e.g., Ps 2, Isa 11, Dan 7, 1 Enoch 47) with the idea of a suffering servant (Isa 42, 49, 52-53). According to Lee,

Mark's portrayal of Jesus' messiahship is a more heavenly and cosmic type than the traditional human royal or warrior type. In Mark, it is not with human powers or kings, but with demonic powers that Jesus engages in battles.⁴⁸⁵

It is the spiritual world that first acknowledge Jesus' identity as Son of God, first the voice from heaven (1:11), and then the demons (3:11; 5:7), while the earthly actors do not understand this. Furthermore, Lee concludes that

In the Markan scheme, Jesus is not only a human or human messiah from below, but also a divine being from above. He not only transcends the division between the heavenly and the earthly, but also merges the two different realms in his life and ministry.⁴⁸⁶

Thus, Jesus' cosmic kingship is tied to his authority in the earthly sphere. The Markan transfiguration episode represents the revelation of his cosmic kingship, and his power and superiority over the evil forces, personified as Satan – the main antagonist in this cosmic battle in Mark's Gospel. The revelation of his heavenly identity in the transfiguration is followed by the exorcism of the unclean spirit after he descended from the mountain, working out his heavenly authority on earth.

As we will see in chapter 5, Pan's identification with Satan depicted as a goat figure has likely its roots in Hebrew and pagan myths and traditions going back to the time before the New Testament. The central story in 1 Enoch 10:4-5, where the arch angel Raphael imprisons Asael – who descended on the top of Hermon and committed the sexual transgression with the daughters of man – and casts him out into the wilderness in a dark pit on sharp stones, has interesting similarities to Pan, as Nickelsburg

⁴⁸⁵ Lee, *Jesus' Transfiguration*, 34.

⁴⁸⁶ Lee, *Jesus' Transfiguration*, 45.

observes. Moreover, Pan's role as a cosmic ruler and the universal god of "All", suggests further points of association. Notably, right after Raphael's commission in 1 Enoch 10, Michael is commissioned to "destroy all the spirits" (v. 15) because of their uncleanness, and then to renovate the earth, expressed in language of fertility (v. 16-19), and clean the earth from all impurity, all wrong, all lawlessness, and all sin, with the frequent use of the adjective "all" (πάσαν, πᾶν), as Nickelsburg points out.⁴⁸⁷ "All" is the governing word in apocalyptic thinking and a typical feature of the genre.⁴⁸⁸ It expresses and emphasizes totality and universality in general, and in this context, the total annihilation of evil and the effect of the blessing. It is not unlikely that the common trope of Pan as universal god of nature is signaled also in the scenes in 1 Enoch, and in the universal scope of Jesus' ministry in the type of Elijah who would "restore all things/ ἀποκαθιστάνει πάντα" in Mark 9:12, as I have argued.

It is also likely that Jesus' visit to the area of Caesarea Philippi would simultaneously have sparked comparison to the political powers of this area, where the Caesar and the god of nature and fertility were worshiped in the same temple. In the broader Greco-Roman cultural environment, earthly matters and conditions were highly related to a spiritual and celestial reality, as we have seen. The earthly ruler (the Caesar) related and legitimised his authority in relation to the divine realm, as "Son of God". As presented earlier, Caesar August was deified and underwent an ascension to heaven, an *apotheosis*, by which he was transformed into the star constellation Capricorn (the celestial image of Pan). A similar idea of *apotheosis* can be seen in Jewish traditions describing the ascension of Enoch (Gen 5:24, 1 En. 71), Moses, and Elijah (2 Kgs 2:1–12).⁴⁸⁹ Burkett argues convincingly that the transfiguration is to be seen as an apocalypse, related to apocalyptic literature,⁴⁹⁰ and says that it "symbolizes his [Jesus'] future ascension to heaven, and his metamorphosis symbolizes the transformation into a heavenly being that he would undergo there."⁴⁹¹ This would mean, according to Burkett, that "[i]n Hellenistic terms, he has undergone apotheosis or deification, becoming a deified mortal, in essence a god."⁴⁹² In other words, a mimicry of the ascension and *apotheosis* of Caesar Augustus, might be implied in Mark's presentation of Jesus. That

⁴⁸⁷ Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch*, 226.

⁴⁸⁸ Freyne, *Jesus*, 138.

⁴⁸⁹ Burkett, Delbert. 'The Transfiguration of Jesus (Mark 9: 2–8): Epiphany or Apotheosis?'. *Journal of Biblical Literature* 138.2 (2019): 413–432. 425.

⁴⁹⁰ Burkett, 'Transfiguration', 429.

⁴⁹¹ Burkett, 'Transfiguration', 425.

⁴⁹² Burkett, 'Transfiguration', 432.

would make further sense given the connections to the Capricorn symbol and Pan held by Augustus and rulers before and after him (see 2.9).

3.6 Conclusions

To sum up, I have argued that Mark's Jesus takes Elijah-typology at various instances in his narratives, and especially in the Caesarea Philippi cycle. Jesus' transfiguration on Hermon and his confrontation with the unclean spirit forms a counterpart to the story of Baal and Elijah. This strongly suggests that Pan is the implied counterpart to Baal. Moreover, the intersecting theological motifs of false worship, adultery, (un)faithfulness, and defilement of the land, in the traditions that Mark (seemingly) depends on and re-interprets, correspond to the main theological issues in Mark. Given the geographical location of Paneas/Caesarea Philippi at the foot of Mount Hermon and the source of Jordan, the life-giver of Galilee with its astonishing verdure, its connection to the defection to Baal worship in Deuteronomic history, the similarity between Baal and Pan as gods of fertility, the apocalyptic tradition about the descent of the Watchers on Mount Hermon, I contend that the events at Caesarea Philippi in Mark's gospel implied a religious competition between Jesus and Pan. This competition could work by the logic of the similarities between the divine figures, and simultaneously being spiritual antagonists. The transfiguration seen as an *apotheosis*, moreover, mimics the earthly rulers' divine aspirations, related to Pan.

Altogether, the context of the transfiguration story presented above shows that it is unlikely that neither Mark, nor people living in this area, or familiar with its characteristics and traditions would not have related the events narrated in Mark to Pan. Nor is it plausible that the events were perceived as unrelated to the idea of a restoration of creation, given the strong emphasis of this motif in Jewish tradition, and the recurring allusions to such motifs in Mark. For a Jewish/Christian community in an agrarian society, oppressed by an empire advertised by the Golden Age myth as the guarantor of fertility, prosperity and blessing, but in reality controlling and confiscating their promised Land, causing social conflicts and the imposing of foreign gods with rituals and practices that violated the commands of YHWH, Mark's narrative would not only make more sense if we assume an implied juxtaposition of Jesus and the cult to Pan and Caesar, it would be an effective and ironic counter narrative.

We will now proceed to explore another narrative in Mark that presents Jesus as a shepherd. I will analyze this, and related motifs in Mark in the light of the juxtaposition of Christ and Pan as shepherd-divinities in reception history.

4 Jesus the True Shepherd in Mark

For my part, I understand it of that Great Saviour of the Faithful, who was shamefully put to death at Jerusalem... And methinks my interpretation is not improper; for He may lawfully be said, in the Greek tongue, to be Pan, since he is our All. For all that we are, all that we live, all that we have, all that we hope, is Him, by Him, from Him, and in Him; He is the Good Pan, the Great Shepherd; who, as the loving Shepherd Corydon affirms, hath not only tender Love and Affection for his sheep, but also for their Shepherds.

Francois Rabelais (1494-1553) *The life of Gargantua and Pantagruel*.

In this chapter, I will review the shepherd motif in Mark chapter six in the context of Jewish and Greco-Roman literature and culture to examine possible allusions to the shepherd-god Pan.⁴⁹³ I will argue that Mark's use of the shepherd motif, 1. depicts Jesus as the coming Davidic shepherding, 2. implies a critique and judgement of the political power/ruling urban elite (Herod Antipas as failed shepherd), and 3. that the pastoral idyllic setting and the abundance/fruitfulness theme in the story of the wilderness feeding, is a parallel and a counter narrative to similar themes in imperial propaganda seen in Roman pastoral poetry, and that this similarity likely evoked comparison between Jesus and Pan. Finally, I will argue that these discourses highlights that the coming of the kingdom, inaugurated by Jesus' symbolic actions, entailed a renewal of creation.

The shepherd motif has been thoroughly studied, both in the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament, including the gospel of Mark. The use of this motif in the Greco-Roman culture has also been examined, but to a lesser degree.⁴⁹⁴ In Mark, the shepherd motif is admittedly not as outspoken as it

⁴⁹³ I prefer the term "motif" here instead of "metaphor" since motif also includes the literal meaning of real shepherds and things related to shepherds. The shepherd motif (with sub-motifs) has several facets and metaphorical uses of "shepherd" can aim at different aspects and parts of this metaphor. In a comparison of the shepherd motif in Mark with other instances of the motif, we must pay attention to what or which aspects that are in play.

⁴⁹⁴ A recent monograph (George, Jogy Cheruvathoor. *The Metaphor of Shepherd in the Gospel of Mark*. PL Academy Research, 2015) examines the shepherd metaphor in Mark, focusing on the function of the shepherd metaphor/theme in the narrative structure with the intertextual attention on the Hebrew Bible prophets but not, however, on extra-biblical texts. Studies of the shepherd motif in NT texts with thorough examinations of the motif in Ancient Near East, Jewish, Hellenistic, and Roman texts have been made by e.g., Aubert, Bernard. *The Shepherd-flock Motif in the Miletus Discourse (Acts 20: 17-38) Against its Historical Background*. Peter Lang, 2009. (Especially chapters V-VI); Baxter, Wayne. *Matthew's Shepherd Motif and its Socio-Religious Implications*. (Phd Diss.) Library and Archives Canada, 2007 (published 2012 by T&T Clark as *Israel's Only Shepherd: Matthew's Shepherd Motif and his Social Setting*); Huntzinger, David Jonathan.

is in the gospels of John and Luke. In John 10, Jesus says in one of the ἐγώ εἰμι sayings that “I am the good shepherd” (John 10:11;14), and in Luke 15, Jesus implicitly talks about himself in a parable as a shepherd searching and rescuing a lost sheep.⁴⁹⁵ In Mark, however, Jesus is *acting out* in real time the task and virtue of the good shepherd,⁴⁹⁶ in the same way as Jesus *acts out* the Elijanic ministry – a role model for Deuteronomic ideology – rather than explicitly being described as “the new Elijah”, or the like, by the narrator or by Jesus himself.⁴⁹⁷ In other words, the identity of Mark’s Jesus is implied in his actions, and in the way the narrative is structured, rather than spelled out as proclamations like the ἐγώ εἰμι sayings in John.⁴⁹⁸

In his study of the shepherd metaphor in Mark, J.C. George argues persuasively that the author of Mark refers to Jesus as shepherd “metaphorically and strategically, to explain the mission and identity of Jesus and to highlight and amplify the different motifs in the narrative” and that the metaphor is “very much integrated into the narrative and interlaced with different motifs in the Markan account such as ‘way’, ‘nourishment’, ‘gathering’ etc.”⁴⁹⁹ Thus, the literary context surrounding the shepherd-flock scene (6:31-44), as well as the whole gospel, is needed to see the rhetoric in the flow of the narrative.

The End of Exile: A Short Commentary on the Shepherd/Sheep Metaphor in Exilic and Post-Exilic Prophetic and Synoptic Gospel Literature. (Phd Diss.) Fuller T.S., 1999), and Vancil, Jack W. ‘The Symbolism of the Shepherd in Biblical, Intertestamental, and New Testament Material’. *Dropsie College Theses*. 18, 1975. Parallels between Luke’s birth narrative with the (idyllic?) presence of shepherds and Greco-Roman bucolic literature has been observed and analysed by e.g., Bultmann, Rudolf. *The History of the Synoptic Tradition* (trans. John Marsh). Basil Blackwell, 1963. 298-299. More recently, Kloppenborg, J. S. and Callon, C. (‘The Parable of the Shepherd and the Transformation of Pastoral Discourse’. *Early Christianity* 1.2 (2010): 218-260) suggests that Luke’s “tendency towards idealization and romanticization of shepherds and the pastoral life puts Luke near the idealizations found in the bucolic and pastoral poets” (p. 255-256). Sarah Harris (*The Davidic Shepherd King in the Lukan Narrative*. Bloomsbury Publishing, 2016) discusses the parallel but refutes it with the argument that Luke’s narrative is centred around Jewish narrative rather than Greco-Roman allusions (see pp. 59-60). In my view, however, the one does not rule out the other.

⁴⁹⁵ Kenneth Bailey has examined the good shepherd tradition in key biblical texts and suggests that in Luke, Jesus defines himself as the good shepherd finding and gathering the lost expressed in parable. In Matthew, the title “shepherds” is applied to the disciples, and in John, the good shepherd is the scarifying shepherd on the cross. See Bailey, Kenneth E. *The Good Shepherd: A Thousand-Year Journey from Psalm 23 to the New Testament*. SPCK, 2015.

⁴⁹⁶ Bailey, *Good Shepherd*, 24, 154.

⁴⁹⁷ As we know, notions about Jesus being Elijah is reported in Mark’s narrative, but as I concluded earlier, these notions are not explicitly confirmed or proclaimed, nor are they dismissed.

⁴⁹⁸ As e.g., Eugene Boring points out “The Gospel [of Mark] is a kerygmatic genre, expressed in narrative, not a wisdom genre, expressed in sayings” (*Mark*, 8).

⁴⁹⁹ George, *Metaphor*, 15-16.

4.1 Pastoralism on the Ground

The shepherd metaphor was deeply rooted in its historical context in which (agro-)pastoralism played a crucial role for economy, sustenance, and culture, and had so for millennia, not least in ancient Palestine. In Ancient Near Eastern Palestine culture, sheep was the most important domestic animal.⁵⁰⁰ By the time of the first century CE, it was still considered as the most useful and versatile cattle.⁵⁰¹ Characteristics of a “good shepherd”, in its metaphorical use, was understood on the basis of real a shepherd’s tasks and necessary skills. Famously, Psalm 23 speaks of YHWH as a shepherd, providing guidance, good pasture, still water, rest, and protection (v. 1-4). In these times, anyone would have recognized these needs as crucial for a flock. If those needs were not satisfied, the important outcome from the animals (wool, milk, meat, skins, horn, and fat) would diminish or disappear due to lamb’s growth loss, predation, robbery, and diseases, with severe consequences for livelihood. Consequently, the shepherd’s character and skills were crucial not only for the sustenance of the community, but also for the cultic practice in Israel, since sheep was a major sacrificial animal. Endurance, courage, practical wisdom, and attentiveness was required for finding and leading the flock to new pastures and still waters, to guard and protect the flock from external threats such as wolves and other predators, harsh weather, and robbers. The “rod and staff” in Psalm 23:4 were the standard instruments for shepherds. The rod (ῥάβδος, LXX), was used as a weapon of defence and as an instrument for counting the sheep at evening. The staff (βακτηρία, LXX) was longer and lighter, used for directing the flock and for the herdsman to lean on. With the crook in one end of the staff, he could handle lambs or drag them up from streams or crevices if needed.⁵⁰²

Not only is the practical knowledge and skills of the shepherd prerequisite for the health and growth of the flock. In Proverbs 27:25-27, the food chain from grass to lamb to clothes and milk and ultimately the prosperity of the household is clearly stated:

Be sure you know the condition of your flocks, give careful attention to your herds; for riches do not endure forever, and a crown is not secure for all generations. When the hay is removed

⁵⁰⁰ Powell, Mark Allan. (ed.) *Harper Collins Bible Dictionary – Revised and Updated*. Harper Collins, 2011. ‘Shepherd’.

⁵⁰¹ Columella. *Rust.* 7.2.1, Varro, *Res Rusticae*. 2.1.4.

⁵⁰² Bailey, *Good Shepherd*, 50-53. Note that the *lagobolon*, a herd’s staff or throwing stick, used to drive flocks or for hunting is (together with the syrinx), the most common attribute in representations of Pan. (Bourgead, *Cult of Pan*, 52 note 66; 64 note 192.)

and new growth appears and the grass from the hills is gathered in, the lambs will provide you with clothing, and the goats with the price of a field. You will have plenty of goats' milk to feed your family and to nourish your female servants.

Grazing management also affected the ecosystem of the pastureland, soil fertility, grass and shrub regrowth, and overall biodiversity in the agrarian landscape. Soil erosion because of overgrazing was already in antiquity a severe, and well-known problem.⁵⁰³ While ancient herdsmen obviously did not have modern detailed scientific knowledge in ecology, we can safely assume that traditional inherited practical wisdom in herding cultures included awareness of how different grazing management affected the landscape and its fertility. On limited grazing land, as in the agro-pastoralism of settled household-farms (especially if part of land was confiscated by political rulers), oversized flocks would lead to overgrazing, land erosion, and increased risk of animal diseases. Thus, wise herding management also required regulation of flock size, in other words slaughtering of unproductive animals (foremost males). Typically, this kind of wisdom among indigenous cultures was (and still is) embedded in myths and cultural codes. In the sacrificial system in Leviticus – set in an agrarian herding culture – slaughter was both a cultic worship, and a means for sustenance, intrinsically tied together.⁵⁰⁴

4.2 Exegesis of Mark 6

The shepherd motif comes to the surface in Mark 6:34, where Jesus has pity on the people “because they were like sheep without a shepherd”. This hinge verse expresses the main theme in this pericope, Jesus as the good shepherd. The expression “like sheep without shepherd” recalls several texts in the Hebrew Bible.⁵⁰⁵ Here, Jesus is introduced as provider of food

⁵⁰³ Hughes, *Environmental Problems*, 72-74.

⁵⁰⁴ Israel's sabbatical codes regarding leaving land in fallow every seventh year, and various harvesting regulations are other examples. See Lev 19:9-10; 19:23-25; 25:7. See also Rooke, Deborah. 'Leviticus', in Marlow, Hillary and Harris, Mark (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of the Bible and Ecology*, 95-110. Oxford University Press, 2022.

⁵⁰⁵ “For the people wander like sheep, oppressed for lack of a shepherd” (Zech 10:2); “Moses said to the Lord, ‘May the Lord, the God who gives breath to all living things, appoint someone over this community to go out and come in before them, one who will lead them out and bring them in, so the Lord's people will not be like sheep without a shepherd.’” (Num 27:15-17); “Then Micaiah said, ‘I saw all Israel scattered on the mountains like sheep without a shepherd, and the Lord said, ‘These people have no master. Let each one go home in peace’” (2 Chr 18:16); “Like a hunted gazelle, like sheep without a shepherd, they will all return to their own people, they will flee to their native land” (Isa 13:14). Bailey notes that since Numbers states a wish, but Zechariah and Mark state a condition of the present, “Zechariah appears to be closer to Mark 6:34” (*Good Shepherd*. 174 n. 27). My focus in this analysis on the shepherd motif in the matrix of Jewish (prophetic) literature, does not rule out the common notion that Jesus’

to the people in the subsequent events of the story. It also points back to the introduction of this pericope, where the “apostles” are “gathered around” (συνάγονται πρὸς, v. 30) Jesus then calls them (δεῦτε)⁵⁰⁶ to come with him to the wilderness (ἐρημον τόπον)⁵⁰⁷ where they can rest (ἀναπαύω). Verse 30 also picks up and concludes the sending out of the twelve from 6:7-13. In typical Markan “sandwich” style, the story of Herod’s banquet and the death of John the Baptist (6:14-29) are placed between the sending out and the regathering of the apostles, followed by the shepherd-flock scene with the miraculous feeding in the wilderness.

These details of the introductory situation (calling, gathering, resting, feeding), and the setting of the scene (wilderness), suggest the implication of a shepherd leading a flock to provide its need (scattered, tired, hungry). The disciples are the first objects of Jesus’ care, with a need that Jesus sets out to provide for. The narrative also introduces in verse 31 “the many” (οἱ πολλοί) who “comes and goes” (ἐρχόμενοι καὶ ὑπάγοντες), who are later included in Jesus’ providing of food.⁵⁰⁸ The “many” finds out about Jesus going away by boat and are even more eager to come to Jesus (v. 33), expressed with “running together” (συντρέχω), enhancing the “coming together” (συνάγω) in v. 30, and creating with the “coming and going” (ἐρχόμενοι καὶ ὑπάγοντες) a situation resembling a large herd of hungry and scattered sheep running to the one they recognize as the shepherd.⁵⁰⁹

Jesus’ teaching in v. 34 might seem to be a deviation from the shepherd motif but is actually in line with it. Not only because teaching in a sense is a provision of “spiritual” food,⁵¹⁰ but teaching was also part of the shepherd activities in several texts. It is implied in Eccl12:11⁵¹¹ but more prominent in later Hellenistic Jewish texts, notably Ben Sira:

A person has mercy for his neighbour but the Lord has mercy upon *all flesh*, reproving and teaching and turning them around like a

wilderness feeding has allusions to the Exodus story, and thus taking up Moses-typology. Nor does it exclude that Mark alludes to the miraculous feedings of Elijah and Elisha (1 Kgs 17:7-16 and 2 Kgs 4:42-44). See 3.1.2.

⁵⁰⁶ “δεῦτε” recalls Jesus’ calling of the disciples in 1:17 (cf. 10:21). The verb συνάγω, George notes, has allusions to shepherd imagery in Ez 34:13, Jer 23:3 and 31:10. (George, *Mark*. 57 n 99.)

⁵⁰⁷ Literally “lonely/desolate place”. The use of ἐρημος is symbolically significant and important as to drawing attention to the literary contexts in Mark (his general preferences of ἐρημος) but also the significance of the wilderness in the history of Israel.

⁵⁰⁸ Whether “the many” in v.31 are the same as “the people” in v.34 does not matter. Though clearly expanded with more people coming from “all the cities”, they have the same role and function in the narrative.

⁵⁰⁹ Hartman, *Markusevangeliet*, 224.

⁵¹⁰ As in Prov 9:5.

⁵¹¹ The words of the wise are like goads, their collected sayings like firmly embedded nails - given by one shepherd. (NIV) λόγοι σοφῶν ὡς τὰ βούκεντρα καὶ ὡς ἥλοι πεφυτευμένοι οἱ παρὰ τῶν συναγμάτων ἐδόθησαν ἐκ ποιμένος ἐνός καὶ περισσὸν ἐξ αὐτῶν (LXX).

shepherd his flock: to those who receive his instruction he shows mercy, even to those who hasten to his judgements (Sir 18:13-14).

The idea of leading and guiding the right way/path as moral teaching (as in the concept of *halakah*) is in line with the shepherd activity of guiding the flock. Among Greek philosophers, the shepherd metaphor is applied to the philosopher/teacher guiding their disciples,⁵¹² and in Philo's allegorical treatises on Numbers 27:16f, the mind (*nous*) is to govern, like a shepherd, and lead "the whole multitude of the parts of the soul".⁵¹³

After Jesus teaching the people, the disciples suggest a solution to the need of hunger. "The place is desolate/ἐρημός" repeats and emphasizes the ἐρημον τόπον from v. 31. They suggest that the people can go to the villages nearby to buy bread for themselves. Jesus' answer in v. 37, and his own initiative to solve the problem (v 38) initiated with the adversative δὲ (instead of καὶ) contrasts the disciples initiative (and lack of belief)⁵¹⁴ with Jesus' faithful and miraculous feeding.⁵¹⁵ Jesus then involves the disciples to investigate how much food there is, thus taking part of the miraculous feeding soon to come, as a continuation of the disciples "training" (6:7-13) from which they just arrived (6:30). The disciples' role in the story is also reminiscent of the preparation for the last supper in 14:12-16, resulting also in Jesus taking a bread and giving thanks (v. 22).⁵¹⁶ (The prayer said by Jesus would have been: "Praise be to you, O Lord our God, king of the world, who makes bread to come forth from the earth, and who provides for all that you have created").⁵¹⁷ There is in both scenes a significant meal with a preparation that builds suspense in the narrative and adds significance to the meal itself.

The miraculous meal, like the last supper, manifests an eschatological fulfilment. If the last supper as indicated in 14:25 is a "foretaste of the messianic banquet in the kingdom of God", then the wilderness meal is "a

⁵¹² See e.g., Epictetus, *Encheridion* 46.2; Dion Chrysostom, *Oratio* 13.21.

⁵¹³ Philo, *De Agricultura*, 1.41-48.

⁵¹⁴ The reader is already familiar with the disciple's lack of faith from 4:40, and throughout Mark, they typically fail to understand what is going on, as the narrator comments after the feeding story and the walking on water (6:52 cf. 8:17; 9:10,32).

⁵¹⁵ Winn, *Mark*, 66-67.

⁵¹⁶ "Jesus took bread, gave praise, broke it, and gave it [to the twelve]" (λαβὼν ἄρτον εὐλογήσας ἔκλασεν καὶ ἔδωκεν αὐτοῖς) and "They all drank" (ἐπιον πάντες) in 14:22-23 seems to recall "[Jesus] took the five loaves and the two fish, looked up to heaven, gave praise and gave to the disciples" (λαβὼν τοὺς πέντε ἄρτους καὶ τοὺς δύο ἰχθύας ἀναβλέψας εἰς τὸν οὐρανὸν εὐλόγησεν καὶ κατέκλασεν τοὺς ἄρτους καὶ ἐδίδου τοῖς μαθηταῖς) and "all ate" (ἔφαγον πάντες) in 6:41-42. Several interpreters have suggested (E.g. Edwards, *Mark* 190, France, *Mark*, 262 + n. 43) that the feeding story is a pre-echo of the last supper in Mark's narrative.

Only for a *first* reader would the effect be to *not* understand this (like the disciples) until the last supper scene.
⁵¹⁷ Edwards, *Mark*, 192. See also Guelich, *Mark*, 342.

pointer to messianic fulfilment”, according to France.⁵¹⁸ However, the hesitation from some interpreters to see eucharistic allusions in the feeding story, is valid in pointing out that the collocations of the eucharistic verbs “take/λαμβάνω” “bless/εὐλογέω”, “break/κλάω”, and “give/δίδωμι” in 6:41, are not necessarily explained as an allusion to the last supper.⁵¹⁹ If they were, the significance of 6:41 would diminish to (only) a “pointer” to the (really significant) last supper. But the pointer to messianic fulfilment lays not so much in the eucharistic verbs, as it does in the plentiful abundance of food and the greening and flowering of the desert. I hold that *both* texts are significant in that they *both* point – taking up different aspects⁵²⁰ – to the prophetic notion in Jewish apocalyptic expectations of an eschatological banquet and by extension the coming of Messiah and the fulfilment of the future vision, conceptualized by Mark as the “kingdom of God”.

The meal, or rather the banquet, starts in 6:39, with the invitation to recline (ἀνακλῖναι). Jesus, as host, makes the disciples co-hosts by letting them prepare the banquet and invite the “guests”. Collin remarks that ἀνακλῖναι “has the sense of ‘place as a guest’”.⁵²¹ The guests are ordered to recline in the green grass (ἐπὶ τῷ χλωρῷ χόρτῳ), in “groups” (συνπόσια συμπόσια), a distributive construction suggesting some kind of ordering, and clearly, συμπόσιον paints a picture of a festive party of drinking (and eating), well understood as a ‘banquet’ reminiscent of Isa 25:6-8, as Collins comments.⁵²² The crowd then sit down in groups (ἀνέπεσαν πρασιαὶ πρασιαὶ). Literally πρασιαὶ means beds for gardening cultivation of vegetables and/or flowers, an expression otherwise never used to describe people, and thus it “offers a remarkably visual impression of the scene, with men lined up in groups like plots of vegetables on the green grass”⁵²³ and “continues the image of a simple outdoor banquet.”⁵²⁴

Moreover, the “air of festivity”, says France, is possibly an intended hint from the author foreshadowing a messianic banquet.⁵²⁵ In addition, I would argue that it is not only symbolically foreshadowing – as if real

⁵¹⁸ France, *Mark*, 262.

⁵¹⁹ Gundry, *Apology*, 331-332. “The portrayal of Jesus as host at a miraculous meal rather than at a eucharistic one offers just as good a reason [...] a eucharistic element being unneeded to explain the collocation [of the verbs].” Collins remark that “Since the gesture are intelligible as common practices related to ordinary Jewish meals, the significance of the similarities should not be pressed” (*Mark*, 655).

⁵²⁰ In the last supper, the motif of covenant is more to the front. Cf. Mark 14:24; Zech 9:11; Ez 34:25.

⁵²¹ Collins, *Mark*, 324.

⁵²² Collins, *Mark*, 324. See also France, *Mark*, 267.

⁵²³ France, *Mark*, 267.

⁵²⁴ Collins, *Mark*, 324.

⁵²⁵ France, *Mark*, 267.

abundance of food and lushing green pastures and feeding real humans' physical hunger were merely symbols – but an inauguration of the coming kingdom of God. For Mark, the awaited future is starting to take place in the present (cf. 1:15 *πεπλήρωται ὁ καιρὸς*), in the ministry of Jesus.

The conclusion and climax of the wilderness banquet is that “They all ate and were satisfied (*ἐχορτάσθησαν*)” (v. 42).⁵²⁶ The reported amount of the leftovers, “Twelve baskets filled/*δώδεκα κοφίνων πληρώματα*”, in v. 43 strikingly contrasts with the need and the scarcity from the beginning of the scene, thus emphasizing the miraculous power behind the feeding and the motif of abundance alluding to the eschatological banquet so vividly painted in the various prophetic future visions. The number twelve might, as Collins suggests (among many others) recall “the hope for the restoration of the twelve tribes in the time of fulfilment”.⁵²⁷ This would fit well with the geographic pattern in Mark, likely also expressing an inclusion of “all Israel”.

While allusions to Elijah (and Elisha) can be discerned (Elijah-typology is not out of sight for Mark) in the intertextual relation between Jesus' miraculous feeding in Mark, and the miraculous feeding in 1 Kgs 17:7-16, and especially in 2 Kgs 4:38-44 (see table in 3.1.2), they are not as strong in this part of Mark. As my exegesis suggests, it is the shepherd motif and, as we will see, other textual allusions that is most protruding.

4.3 Jesus as YHWH's Promised New Shepherd

To understand the significance of Mark's use of the shepherd motif, we need to look at its background in Jewish traditions, in which Mark places himself. In the Hebrew Bible, shepherd-imagery is very common. The shepherd-king, and the shepherd-god motifs express in the Hebrew Bible as well as in other Ancient Near East texts foremost the idea of *leading* (and by implication, *following* with respect to the people being led).⁵²⁸ Shepherd imagery is often applied to the foundational stories of deliverance, the exodus from Egypt (and from Babylon), where YHWH and his appointed leaders rescue Israel from captivity, oppression and distress, providing the people with food and water in the wilderness, often

⁵²⁶ Winn, *Mark*, 71-72; Collins, *Mark*, 326.

⁵²⁷ Collins, *Mark*, 326.

⁵²⁸ McDaniel, Ferris Lee. *The Relationship Between the Shepherd and Banquet Motifs of Psalm 23*. (Phd Diss.) Dallas Theological Seminary, 1983. 78.

by means of Moses' (herd's) staff.⁵²⁹ Two basic uses of the shepherd motif can be observed: YHWH as shepherd, and human leaders as shepherd. Apart from YHWH as the good shepherd epitomized in Psalm 23, leaders of Israel were frequently referred to as shepherds. Moses asks YHWH to appoint a leader for the community, so that the people "may not be like sheep without a shepherd" (Num 27:15-17). When David is anointed to king of Israel, the people argue that while Saul still was the king, YHWH appointed David to be the shepherd of the people of Israel (2 Sam 5:1-3). Surprisingly often, the leaders were themselves actual herdsman, notably Abel, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, and David. In the Sumerian King List, likewise, several kings were former shepherds, and thus, shepherding seems to have functioned as an apprenticeship for kingship, both in Israel and its surrounding cultures, at least in literary contexts.⁵³⁰

4.3.1 Psalm 23

The combination of the shepherd motif and the banquet motif in Mark, recalls Psalm 23. In the first part of the Psalm, YHWH as shepherd (Κύριος ποιμαίνει με) fills the need (οὐδέν με ὑστερήσει), offering dwelling in a place of green grass (εἰς τόπον χλόης), and nourishing by the water of rest (ἐπὶ ὕδατος ἀναπαύσεως ἐξέθρεψέν), and leading on the path of righteousness (ὠδήγησέν ἐπὶ τρίβους δικαιοσύνης, LXX). In Mark, Jesus is presented as shepherd, offering rest, food, guidance, and teaching.

In Psalm 23:5, the shepherd imagery seems to shift to a (royal?) banquet scene; a guest welcomed by a generous host, pouring (perfumed) oil on the head as customary,⁵³¹ preparing a table, and filling the cup (of wine). Various attempts to structure this psalm have dealt with the shift of figure from shepherd to host, and how they relate and can be unified.⁵³² Given the common depiction of kings as "shepherds" in Ancient Near East in general, and kings as hosts of royal banquets, the two themes can be united. According to McDaniel, the relation between the shepherd motif and the banquet motif lies especially in the deliverance from distress: "[T]he psalmist is confident that YHWH will provide for his deliverance out of

⁵²⁹ Huntzinger states that "[T]he metaphor of shepherd/sheep in the prophetic (exilic/post-exilic) and synoptic literature speaks of the relationship and activity of God to his people at the same time it recalls the condition of dislocation and disfranchisement as experienced by the people during the captivity. The experience of the exile serves as the standard reference point for the metaphor in these texts and gives it its underlying meaning." (*End of Exile*, 14).

⁵³⁰ DDD, 'Shepherd'.

⁵³¹ Bailey, *Good Shepherd*. 58.

⁵³² See McDaniel, *Relationship*. Ch. II.

distress and is even now preparing that joyous salvation.”⁵³³ Being a major foundational narrative of Israel, YHWH’s rescuing and deliverance from captivity and oppression, leading the people (as a shepherd) into a promised land of plenty, and future celebration and blessing, it makes good sense that Psalm 23 in subsequent Jewish interpretation was understood against this foundational narrative. The psalmist expresses in good confidence his personal reliance on YHWH’s provision based on God’s mercy and the covenantal promise of deliverance and blessing. Thus, at least in a Deuteronomistic reading, the concluding “goodness” (*tov*) and “mercy” (*khesed*) that the psalmist prays for, most certainly imply the good effects – blessings – of the covenant, which included good harvest of grapes and grain (giving wine and bread), rich and fertile sheep and lambs, and safety from predators and enemies.⁵³⁴ Therefore, both the good shepherd and the banquet host in Psalm 23 are, metaphorically speaking, incarnations of YHWH, giving blessings of the covenant to the psalmist. The shepherd motif and the banquet motif can also be unified on a very basic and material level. In fact, the prosperity, and the abundance of the meal in the banquet scene is naturally dependant on the good shepherd whose skills and character are crucial for raising a lamb of good quality to slaughter and prepare for the meal.

In Mark, the pastoral scenery is enhanced rather than shifted, and combined with the host/banquet motif towards the end. The guests are not invited to a table in a royal residence but to recline in the green grass outdoors. Jesus as provider of food to the “flock” of people, now gathered in orderly groups, combines the shepherd motif and the host/banquet motif. By completely fulfilling the need raised in v. 34 (“like sheep without shepherd”) in the gathering and feeding, Mark presents Jesus as the good shepherd.

4.3.2 Shepherd Motifs in Prophetic Scriptures

In prophetic texts, leaders of Israel are frequently referred to as shepherds, often in a negative sense. Prophetic judgement over Israel’s unfaithfulness, typically condemn these leaders as bad shepherds, in contrast to YHWH himself, and his appointed. Judgement over bad shepherds is typically followed by a promise to send a new (Davidic) good shepherd.

⁵³³ McDaniel, *Relationship*. 219.

⁵³⁴ See Lev 26 and Deut 28. Bailey (referring to Bultmann) argues that “*khesed*/mercy” (v. 6) denotes covenantal faithfulness, but at the same time freely given grace. Bailey, *Good Shepherd*. 61. See also *NIBC* on Ps 23.

In Jeremiah, bad rulers depicted as “shepherds” occur in several passages.⁵³⁵ The motif is perhaps most clear in 23:1-4:

Woe to the shepherds who destroy and *scatter* the sheep of my pasture!’ says the LORD. Therefore thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, concerning the shepherds who shepherd my people: ‘It is you who have scattered my flock and have driven them away, and you have *not attended* them. So I will attend to you for your evil doings, says the LORD. Then I myself will *gather* the remnant of my flock out of all the lands where I have driven them, and I will *bring them back* to their pasture, and they will be *fruitful and multiply*. I will raise up shepherds over them who will shepherd them, and they shall no fear or be dismayed, nor shall any be missing, says the LORD.

Here, the judgement over the bad shepherds points *to lack of care*, and failure to hold the flock together, thus *scattering* the flock, and even “driving them away” (v. 1-2a). The judgement is followed by a promise from YHWH to *gather* the (rest of the) flock, lead them to good pasture, and let them “be fruitful and multiply”. In verse 4, the promise to be the peoples shepherd is by means of sending new shepherds. The promise to gather the scattered sheep of Israel recurs in Jer 31:10: “He who scattered Israel will gather him and will keep him as a shepherd does a flock.” In this salvific vision, the outcomes/consequences of YHWH’s promised salvation are: deliverance from the “hands too strong for him” (31:11) i.e. the political predominance (Babylon), provision of grain, wine, oil, sheep and oxen (v. 12), but also that “then shall the young women rejoice in the dance” (v. 13). In verse 14, the promise entails that the people will be “satisfied with my bounty”.⁵³⁶ As we will see, these details add to Mark’s presentation of Herod’s banquet a sense of deep irony and parody, when juxtaposed with the “banquet”-scene hosted by Jesus in Mark 6:39-44.

The shepherd motif is once again used in Jer 50:6. The oracle against Babylon starts with a proclamation of victory over the idols “Bel” and “Merodach”, both referring to the principal god of Babylon (v. 2).⁵³⁷ The people of Israel are described as “*lost sheep*” because “the shepherds led them astray, and caused them to roam on the mountains”, and they “forgot

⁵³⁵ Besides the passages taken up here, see also 6:3; 10:21; 12:10; 25:34.

⁵³⁶ The verb *saba* ‘(s)atiate with food or drink’ is used also in the exodus feeding (Ex 16:12), and in Deut 31:20 “When I have brought them into the land flowing with milk and honey, the land I promised on oath to their ancestors, and when they *eat their fill* and thrive, they will turn to other gods and worship them, rejecting me and breaking my covenant.” (NIV, italics added).

⁵³⁷ DDD, ‘Marduk’. Marduk, as many other deities in the ANE, had the title “Shepherd” attributed to him. Huntzinger, *End of Exile*. 77.

their *resting place*”⁵³⁸ (v. 6, cf. 33:12b), their right pasture being YHWH himself (νομή δικαιοσύνης, v. 7, LXX). In 50:17-19 the same idea is repeated: the prophet calls Israel a “scattered flock/πρόβατον πλανώμονον” (LXX) which again implies the lack of a (good) shepherd. The consequence is here first that Israel fell prey to *foreign rulers* (Assyria and Babylon), then the judgement is announced over the evil powers, followed by the promise from YHWH to restore (ἀποκαθαστήσω, LXX) Israel, “to its pasture, and it shall feed on Carmel and in Bashan, and on the hills of Ephraim and in Gilead its hunger shall be satisfied” (Jer 50:19). The motif of God being the shepherd of Israel is here implied in “pasture” (νομήν) and “feed/graze” (νέμω).

In Ezekiel 34, the judgment towards the bad shepherds/leaders is extended and somewhat intensified: Not only have they chased the flock to scatter, but they also became victims of predators (Ez 34:5 but cf. Jer 50:17), and not only have they failed to provide necessary care, but they also provide themselves voraciously with the outcome of the flock. In verse 2b-3, the prophet proclaims: “Woe, you shepherds of Israel who have been feeding yourselves!” (ποιμένες ἐαυτοῦς, LXX) and continues: “Should not shepherds feed the sheep? You eat the fat; you clothe yourselves with the wool; you slaughter the choice animals, but you do not feed the sheep”. In other words, the political leaders (the “shepherds”) of Israel abused their power by seizing the outcome from the land for their own luxury and failed to bring care and justice to the people. The result is scattering of the “flock” and exile (“my sheep were scattered over all the face of the earth, with no one to search or seek for them” v. 6b). The response from YHWH follows the exodus pattern: “I will rescue (ἐξαίρέω, LXX, cf. Ex 3:8) my sheep from their mouths, so that they may not be food for them” (v. 10). YHWH’s rescue continues with *gathering* the scattered sheep and *leading* them to good pastures (*feeding*) in their own land and letting them *rest*:

For thus says the Lord God: I myself will search for my sheep and will sort them out. As shepherds sort out their flocks when they are among *scattered* sheep, so I will sort out my sheep. I will rescue them from all the places to which they have been scattered on a day of clouds and thick darkness. I will bring them out from the peoples and *gather* (συνάγω LXX) them from the countries and bring them into their own land, and I will *feed* them on the mountains of Israel, by the watercourses, and in all the inhabited parts of the land. I will feed them with *good pasture*, and the

⁵³⁸ LXX has κοίτης (marriage bed, promiscuity), likely alluding to Israel’s infidelity in sexual overtones, cf. Heb 13:4, Rom 13:13.

mountain heights of Israel shall be their pasture; there they shall *lie down* (ἀναπαύω LXX) in good *grazing* land, and they shall feed on rich pasture on the mountains of Israel. I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep, and I will make them *lie down* (ἀναπαύω), says the Lord God. I will seek the lost, and I will bring back the strays, and I will bind up the injured, and I will strengthen the weak, but the fat and the strong I will destroy. I will feed them with justice. (Ez 34:11-16)

In verses 11-16, YHWH himself is the promised future shepherd, but in verse 23 (cf. 37:24-26), a deputy Davidic shepherd is introduced: “I will place over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he will tend them; he will tend them and be their shepherd.” This appointed shepherd will bring blessings – on the basis of a “covenant of peace” (διαθήκην εἰρήνῃ) – of security from enemies/predators (v. 25, 28), rain (v. 26), fruitfulness of the land/soil (v. 27a, 29), and liberation from oppression (v. 27b). These motifs recall the blessings of the covenant. The shepherd imagery in Ez 34 is very similar to Jeremiah. Gathering the lost sheep, abundant provision of food, rest, and deliverance from oppression, are recurring sub-motifs.⁵³⁹ The idea of gathering (συνάγω), and resting (ἀναπαύω, repeated twice) are also prominent in Mark’s story: the apostles are gathered around Jesus (συνάγονται οἱ ἀπόστολοι πρὸς τὸν Ἰησοῦν) and the need to rest (ἀναπαύσασθε) is what drives the story out to the wilderness (ἐρημον).

In Ezekiel, the shepherding activity of YHWH also includes that he “will bind up the injured” (34:16). Obviously, healing the sick is a crucial part of Jesus’ ministry in Mark, and though not explicitly *as shepherd* in the healing narratives, it fits well with the caring shepherding activity of YHWH in Ez 34:16. Especially the summary report of Jesus’ healing of the sick in Mark 6:53-56 can well be intended to continue the depiction of Jesus as caring shepherd for the crowd flocking to Jesus (cf. 6:33 and 6:54).

Several passages in Mark are (likely) influences from Zechariah.⁵⁴⁰ Most clear is the quotation in Mark 14:27 from Zech 13:7 “I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered” (Mark 14:27).⁵⁴¹ Zechariah’s

⁵³⁹ A difference being that Ezekiel introduces the sub-motif of “bad sheep”, see 34:17-22.

⁵⁴⁰ Besides the quotation in 14:27, the entry into Jerusalem on a colt (Mark 11:2;7 cf. Zech 9:9), the cleansing of the temple (Mark 11:15 cf. Zech 14:21), and the covenant of blood (Mark 14:24 cf. Zech 9:11) are likely intended allusions. See de Jonge, ‘Cleansing’, and Marcus, Joel. *The Way of the Lord*. A&C Black, 2004. 153-163.

⁵⁴¹ The quotation in Mark differs from the reading in LXX. Either the text was modified by Mark, or dependent on a version lost to us. See Collins, *Mark*. 669 + note 230.

use of the shepherd motif is extended and more complex than the use in Ezekiel and Jeremiah.⁵⁴² The future shepherd is condemned rather than approved, but as part of a cleansing process from which a remnant will bestow as the people of YHWH (13:7-9).

In the second part of Zechariah, the similar pattern of judgement over the shepherds found in Jeremiah and Ezekiel recurs: “My anger is hot against the shepherds, and I will punish the leaders, for the LORD of hosts cares for his flock” (10:3), and in 11:17: “Oh, my worthless shepherd, who deserts the flock!” The judgement is combined with a promise from YHWH to be a shepherd of his people (9:16a; 10:3b, 8). The judgement in this context also includes the *terafim* (idols, household gods) and the *qusmim* (diviners), to which the people has turned, instead of turning to the true creator (10:2a, cf. 13:2). The consequence of not turning to YHWH for rain (10:1), is that the people/flock is driven away (into exile) like sheep without a shepherd (10:2b).⁵⁴³

Judgement of bad shepherds occurs also in Isaiah (56:9-12). The leaders of Israel are sarcastically described as “blind sentinels/watchers” and “dumb/silent dogs” (likely sheepdogs). They are supposed to be shepherds, observant, caring, and wise, holding the flock together (as YHWH gathers Israel in v. 8), but instead they are ignorant, impotent, gluttonous and care only about their own pleasure.

The image of YHWH as shepherd is in Isaiah applied to the promise to deliver and lead the people of Israel from exile through the wilderness, in terms of a new exodus:

A voice cries out: “In the wilderness prepare the way for the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be lifted up, every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, the rough places a plain. And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together. For the mouth of the Lord has spoken.” A voice says, “Cry out.” And I said, “What shall I cry?” All people are like grass, and all their faithfulness is like the flowers of the field. The grass withers, the flowers fade, because the breath of the Lord blows on them. Surely the people are grass. The grass withers; the flowers fade, but the word of our God will stand forever. Get you up to a high mountain, O Zion, the herald of good news; lift up your voice with strength. O Jerusalem, herald of good news, lift it up, do not fear; say to the

⁵⁴² Baxter, *Matthew's Shepherd*, 80.

⁵⁴³ The LXX ἐξαίρω (lead out) and the Hebrew *nsou* (to break up, also applied to pulling out tent pegs) expresses the idea of wandering out to exile.

cities of Judah, “Here is your God!” See, the LORD God comes with might, and his arm rules for him; his reward is with him, and his recompense before him. He will feed his flock like a shepherd; He will gather the lambs in his arms and carry them in his bosom and gently lead the mother sheep. (Isa 40:3-11, cf. 43:16-21).

It is interesting that Isa 40:3 “A voice cries out: ‘In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God’” is quoted in Mark 1:3.⁵⁴⁴ This suggests that this prophetic tradition is important for Mark (in general), and that the quotation chosen by Mark likely alludes to the close literary context of the citing. Joel Marcus argues that this is exactly the case, based on further observations regarding this quotation in Mark. He suggests that Mark 1:2a “as it is written in the prophet Isaiah” is an elaboration of the opening and programmatic announcement of the gospel in Mark 1:1 “The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, [the Son of God]”. Moreover, Marcus observes that “Isa 40:9-10 has strong thematic links with the opening section in Mark’s gospel”, pointing to the ὁ εὐαγγελιζόμενος in Isa 40:9, one of the “fountainhead verses for the concept of εὐαγγέλιον”.⁵⁴⁵

Both in the Isaian and the Markan context, the announcement of the gospel is the revelation of God’s coming in power.⁵⁴⁶ Marcus also points out that the Targum translation of “Behold your God” in Isa 40:9 reads “the kingly power of your God has been revealed”, and thus closely linked to the “kingdom of God” in Mark.⁵⁴⁷ If Marcus has it right (which I think he has), the shepherd motif in this programmatic text in Isaiah adds to my argument that the motif also plays a significant role in Mark. What Marcus does not notice, however, is the potential significance of the imperative in the first part of 40:9: “ἐπ’ ὄρος ὑψηλὸν ἀνάβηθι/go up on a high mountain!”. This strengthens the link to Mark: in 6:46 “[Jesus] went up to the mountain to pray/ἀπῆλθεν εἰς τὸ ὄρος προσεύξασθαι”), and especially in the transfiguration scene (9:2) “[Jesus] led them up to a high mountain/ἀναφέρει αὐτοὺς εἰς ὄρος ὑψηλὸν”, elaborated in the previous chapter.

⁵⁴⁴ The Greek in Mark 1:3 (φωνῇ βοῶντος ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ· ἐτοιμάσατε τὴν ὁδὸν κυρίου, εὐθείας ποιεῖτε τὰς τρίβους αὐτοῦ) is almost verbatim from LXX (φωνῇ βοῶντος ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ ἐτοιμάσατε τὴν ὁδὸν κυρίου εὐθείας ποιεῖτε τὰς τρίβους τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμῶν), except that LXX ends with “the paths of our God”, instead of “his paths”.

⁵⁴⁵ Marcus, *Way*, 17-19.

⁵⁴⁶ Marcus, *Way*, 19.

⁵⁴⁷ Marcus, *Way*, 20.

As we have seen in the prophetic oracles of Jeremiah, the promised restoration is expressed in pastoral language, and it includes various aspects of the coming salvation, notably deliverance from oppressing powers and their idols, feeding/feasting,⁵⁴⁸ rest, and fertility and bounty of cattle and crops. Moreover, the people are repeatedly described as lost sheep/flock. In sum, despite various differences, we see in the prophetic texts examined above the following pattern:

1. The problem: Scattered sheep due to bad shepherds, and defection to idols.
2. Judgement: the bad shepherds and idols are condemned.
3. Promise: YHWH promises the people to gather and care for the scattered flock/people, either by himself or by a deputy shepherd.
4. Salvific future: The good shepherd's rescuing results in the return to an idealized homeland that includes ecological renewal, rain, fertility, and bounty.
5. The judgement also includes the idols, or false gods, to which the people have turned.

4.3.3 Second Temple Jewish Texts

The shepherd motif continued to be used in Jewish texts into Hellenistic time, often reflecting the use in the Hebrew Bible, but with a variety of uses. The broad overview in Wayne Baxter's study suggests that "similar to the Hebrew Bible, Second Temple Jews most commonly appropriated the metaphor for rulers and YHWH." Rulers depicted as shepherds is, according to Baxter's study, applied to monarchs (Philo, Josephus), King David (4Q504, 1Q34, Josephus), intercessors (Philo, Pseudo-Philo), religious leaders (*Damascus document*, 4 Ezra), but also to the virtuous mind (Philo).⁵⁴⁹ In the apocalyptic *Dream vision* in 1 Enoch, the motif of negligent shepherds/rulers (likely derived from the Hebrew Bible prophets) is developed in an allegory of Israel's history. Former gentile rulers over Israel are here depicted as seventy angelic shepherds. Though appointed by God, they are disobedient and malevolent and brutalize the

⁵⁴⁸ I argue that the element of celebration/feasting, as in Ps 23:5, is present in some passages in Jeremiah, notably the dancing girls (see above), in a context of a feast/banquet (31:13-14). χαρήσσομαι (rejoice), χαρμονή (joy/delight), ἐφραυνόμεν (be merry of festive enjoyment/celebrate) and μεθύσκω (become intoxicated) (v. 13, LXX) together with the abundance of food (v.14) strongly suggest feasting. See also 31:4b: λήμνη τύμπανόν σου καὶ ἐξελεύσῃ μετὰ συναγωγῆς παιζόντων "take your kettledrum and go out with the congregation and dance/amuse yourselves" (LXX, my translation).

⁵⁴⁹ Baxter, *Matthew's Shepherd*, 128.

flock of Israel. Therefore, they are divinely condemned for their unrighteous rule.⁵⁵⁰

The appropriation of “shepherd” to YHWH, mostly with mercy as dominant trait, is found in Ben Sira, 1 Enoch, 4Q509, The Apocalypse of Ezekiel, and Pseudo-Philo. Other traits of YHWH as shepherd also includes the roles of judge (1 Enoch), military protector (Judith), and sovereign ruler (Philo and Ben Sira). In Psalms of Solomon, the shepherd metaphor refers to a Davidic Messiah as warrior-ruler and judge. The psalmist cries out for a messianic deliverer, described as one who “shepherds the Lord’s flock” (17:40).⁵⁵¹

This overview shows that the appropriation of the shepherd motif from the Hebrew Bible continues in the Second Temple period but takes several new developments. The militaristic interpretations in some Jewish apocalyptic traditions/groups are not prominent in Mark.⁵⁵² Nor is the idea of a shepherd as judge. Instead, Mark (14:27) adopts the idiosyncratic idea in Zechariah (13:7) that the future shepherd appointed by YHWH is *condemned* as part of a cleansing process (13:9), in the prediction of his execution. The expectations of a coming Davidic shepherd-messiah, the idealistic pastoral traits of YHWH as shepherd, and the depiction of (evil) rulers as shepherds correspond broadly to the Hebrew Bible and recurs in Mark, though uniquely combined. The judgement/banishing of the idols/false gods is likely implied in the exorcisms of Mark’s Jesus.

4.4 Renewed Creation in the Wilderness

For a proper understanding of the shepherd motif in Mark 6, the wilderness motif must be more closely examined. Whereas in Ezekiel and Jeremiah, the vision of the future salvation is placed in the promised land after the exodus, in Isaiah the transformation of the wilderness, as the *way* to the promised land, is emphasized. In chapter 49, the shepherd imagery continues in the promise of deliverance: as the people walks through the wilderness, they will be fed “along the ways” (v. 9), and “not hunger or thirst” and “he who has pity on them will lead them and by springs of water will guide them” (v. 10). Hutzinger states that

⁵⁵⁰ 1 Enoch 89:59-64. My brief summary of the *Dream vision* rests on Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch*, 389-393.

⁵⁵¹ Baxter, *Matthew’s Shepherd*, 129-133.

⁵⁵² Marcus suggests, however, that προάγειν in Mark 14:28 implies a militant dimension (in the sense that God/Jesus leads his people/flock as a military leader leading his forces) set in the idea of an apocalyptic holy war (*‘Way’*, 163). It is clear, however, that in Mark the idea of an apocalyptic battle is not a literally battle that will be won with military power.

The description of people feeding beside the roads as sheep is significant since the image of roads which lead to the place of divine salvation is characteristic in Second Isaiah in his depiction of the return from exile.⁵⁵³

Marcus, likewise, remarks that the wilderness theme in Mark is pointing to “the Isaian picture of the wilderness as the staging ground for YHWH’s future victory over the power of evil.”⁵⁵⁴ Mark is (partly) in continuation with Jewish interpretation of Isaiah’s eschatological vision as a *future* “exile” in the end of days, involving a retreat to the wilderness as preparation for the “holy war” and where the apocalyptic victory would be won. The feeding story in the wilderness in Mark 6 has as background primarily the hope for a “second exile”. This hope entailed, as for the Qumran community, that Israel would experience a new encounter with God in the wilderness as the beginning of the apocalyptic day of the Lord.⁵⁵⁵ This hope is also expressed in Hosea, in the elaborated metaphor of Israel as an unfaithful wife (see 3.4.3). YHWH promises to “allure her and lead her into the wilderness (ἐρημος) and speak to her heart (λαλήσω ἐπὶ τὴν καρδίαν αὐτῆς)” (Hos 2:14, my translation of LXX). I agree with Marcus that Mark’s placing of Jesus in the wilderness should be understood in the context of prophetic hope for a new exodus, rather than Moses-typology from the first Exodus story.

The detail of the “green grass” (χλωρῷ χόρτῳ) in Mark 6:39, as Marcus argues, reflects the theme of “an eschatological transformation of the wilderness into a place of amazing fertility”.⁵⁵⁶ In Isaiah 49, as we saw, the *way* out from captivity to the promised land *through* the wilderness is emphasized. The shepherd feeds the flock in the wilderness, and the wilderness itself is part of the transformation. In Mark, the χλωρῷ χόρτῳ could of course indicate that ἔρημος refers not to a desert but to (desolated) pasturing areas, and at the time of the year when the grass is green (spring). With the Isaiah context in mind, however, it is much more likely that Mark instead first points to ἔρημος (6:31,35) as bare wilderness (such kind of land could still have been fairly close to “the surrounding country and villages”, 6:36), and then points to the χλωρῷ χόρτῳ, that together with πρασιαὶ πρασιαὶ creates a surprising contrast in the reader’s mental image. The effect is a depiction of a *transformation* of the bare wilderness into a

⁵⁵³ Hutzinger, *End of Exile*, 129.

⁵⁵⁴ Marcus, *Way*, 22.

⁵⁵⁵ Marcus, *Way*, 24.

⁵⁵⁶ Marcus, *Way*, 24.

green lushing pasture and flowering garden beds. This is precisely what is promised in Isaiah 35:

The wilderness (ἐρημος LXX) and the dry land shall be glad; the desert (ἐρημος) shall rejoice and blossom; like the crocus it shall blossom abundantly and rejoice with joy and shouting (35:1-2).⁵⁵⁷

Additionally, in Isa 51:3, the oracle declares a promise that “the Lord will comfort Zion; he will comfort all her waste places and will make her wilderness like Eden, her desert like the garden of the Lord.” The expression χλωρῷ χόρτῳ in Mark 6:39 is hardly an insignificant remark to indicate the season, or to explain that the surface of the ground made a “suitable cushion on which to recline”.⁵⁵⁸ Mark is sparse in his wording and does not seem to randomly add insignificant details. Some interpreters suggest an allusion to YHWH as shepherd in Ps 23:2, leading the psalmist to green pastures.⁵⁵⁹ Van Iersel connects the χλωρῷ χόρτῳ to the shepherd motif apparent in Mark 6:34, and suggests that this “refers implicitly to Psalm 23, which sings not only of meadows of green grass and resting at waterside, but also of reclining at YHWH’s table.”⁵⁶⁰ Mark might well allude to Psalm 23, especially since the shepherd motif and the banquet motif are combined in both texts. However, there is more going on theologically in Mark beyond creating a pleasant bucolic setting for the feeding. I maintain that in Mark’s presentation, the sprouting of the green grass in the wilderness (together with other significant details), points to the fundamental Jewish belief in God as creator, and the prophetic future vision of a renewal of the creation.

Interestingly, Philo adopts the shepherd of Psalm 23 to God as creator and cosmic ruler:

Thus, indeed, being a shepherd is a good thing, so that it is justly attributed, not only to kings, and to wise men, and to souls who are perfectly purified, but also to God, the ruler of all things. [...] For God, like a shepherd and a king, governs (as if they were a flock of sheep) the earth, and the water, and the air, and the fire, and all the plants, and living creatures that are in them, whether mortal or divine; and he regulates the nature of the heaven, and the periodical revolutions of the sun and moon, and the variations and harmonious movements of the other stars, ruling them according

⁵⁵⁷ Cf. Isa 32:15b; 41:18; Ez 34:27, 29; 36:8, 35.

⁵⁵⁸ So, Gundry, *Apology*, 331.

⁵⁵⁹ France, *Mark*, 267; George, *Metaphor*, 68; Van Iersel, *Mark*, 228. Geulich, *Mark*, 341.

⁵⁶⁰ Van Iersel, *Mark*, 228.

to law and justice; appointing, as their immediate superintendent, his own right reason, his first-born son, who is to receive the charge of this sacred company, as the lieutenant of the great king; for it is said somewhere, 'Behold, I am he! I will send my messenger before thy face, who shall keep thee in the Road.' Let therefore all the world, the greatest and most perfect flock of the living God, say 'The Lord is my shepherd, and he shall cause me to lack nothing' (*De Agricultura*, 1.50-52).

According to Philo, God is thus ultimately the shepherd of the universe, controlling every aspect of the cosmos. "His first-born son" is for Philo the λόγος but would later be interpreted as Christ in early Christianity, as in the Fourth Gospel (1:14) and in subsequent Christian theology. I argue that the idea of a shepherd-god as cosmic ruler, governing water, air, and plants, is assumed in the rhetoric in Mark. As we saw earlier, the idea that Pan as shepherd-deity had in philosophical traditions a similar cosmic role, seems to have come in contact with Hellenistic Judaism. It is a strong possibility that this idea was known to Mark and his readers as well.

In Mark, Jesus' power over the non-human creation (the sea, the wind, fig-tree) suggests that he works in the agency of YHWH the creator, and that the proclamation of the kingdom of God entails the inauguration of a renewal of the creation. In Isaiah 40-55, creation language and creation theology are very prominent.⁵⁶¹ The future salvific vision presented in Isaiah 40 and subsequent chapters is introduced and motivated by a recurring assertion that YHWH is the creator (Isa 40:28; 42:5; 44:2,24; 45:7,18; 49:5; 54:16). Fretheim states that

The interweaving language about the creation of the world and the creation of Israel throughout Isaiah 40-55 is deliberate and compelling: just as God created and continues to create the cosmos, so God is committed to bring newness to Israel's spirit and life. Even more, God's commitments to Israel are as sure as God's commitments to the creation itself.⁵⁶²

If Mark's programmatic opening of his gospel has strong parallels to the declaration of God coming in power – as shepherd – in Isaiah 40, it is likely that the imagery of greening transformation of the wilderness and the abundance of food alludes to creation theology (mainly) from Isaiah. In 44:2-4 the oracle declares that:

⁵⁶¹ According to Terrance Fretheim, it is more frequent than in any other prophet. Fretheim, *God and World*, 181.

⁵⁶² Fretheim, *God and World*, 183-184.

Thus says the Lord who made you, who formed you in the womb and will help you: Do not fear, O Jacob my servant, Jeshurun whom I have chosen. For I will pour water on the thirsty land and streams on the dry ground; I will pour my spirit upon your descendants and my blessing on your offspring. They shall spring up like a green (χλόρος) tamarisk, like willows by flowing streams.

In 15:6, a judgement/curse on the desolation of Moab is expressed as a reversed process of creation:

the waters of Nimrim are a desolation; the grass is withered; the new growth fails; vegetation is no more (Isa 15:6).

τὸ ὕδωρ τῆς Νεμριμ ἔρημον ἔσται καὶ ὁ χόρτος αὐτῆς ἐκλείψει
χόρτος γὰρ χλωρὸς οὐκ ἔσται (Isa 15:6 LXX).

At several other instances in the Hebrew Bible, the motif of sprouting green grass and nourishing (in the desert) occurs. In the speech of YHWH to Job, the motif is connected to YHWH as creator:

Who cuts a channel for the torrents of rain and a way for the thunderbolt, to bring rain on a land where no one lives, on the desert (ἔρημος), which is empty of human life, to satisfy (χορτάζω) the waste and desolate land, and to make the ground put forth grass? (ἐκβλαστῆσαι ἑξοδὸν χλόης) (Job 38:26-27).

In the creation stories in Genesis, we find the same motif: YHWH makes the (desolate) earth sprout with green grass, by means of sending rain:

when no plant of the field was yet in the earth and no vegetation of the field had yet sprung up—for the Lord God had not caused it to rain upon the earth, and there was no one to till the ground (Gen 2:5).

Καὶ πᾶν χλωρὸν ἄγρου πρὸ τοῦ γενέσθαι ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς καὶ πάντα
χόρτον ἄγρου πρὸ τοῦ ἀνατεῖλαι οὐ γὰρ ἔβρεξεν ὁ θεὸς ἐπὶ τὴν
γῆν καὶ ἄνθρωπος οὐκ ἦν ἐργάζεσθαι τὴν γῆν (LXX).

The first creation story concludes with YHWH giving to “everything that breaths life all (kinds of) green grass/plants to eat”:

And to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the air and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food. And it was so (Gen 1:30).

καὶ πᾶσι τοῖς θηρίοις τῆς γῆς καὶ πᾶσι τοῖς πετεινοῖς τοῦ οὐρανοῦ
καὶ παντὶ ἔρπετῳ τῷ ἔρποντι ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς ὃ ἔχει ἐν ἑαυτῷ ψυχὴν
ζωῆς πάντα χόρτον γλωρὸν εἰς βρῶσιν καὶ ἐγένετο οὕτως (LXX).

In the foundational story of the first exodus through the wilderness, where YHWH promised a new land, and gave the people the commandments, the blessing – if faithful to YHWH – entailed the promise that

he will give grass in your field for your livestock, and you will eat your fill (Deut 11:15).

καὶ δώσει χορτάσματα ἐν τοῖς ἀγροῖς σου τοῖς κτήνεσίν σου καὶ φαγὼν καὶ ἐμπλησθεῖς (LXX).

In Psalm 146:8 YHWH is praised for gathering (ἐπισυνάγω, LXX, cf. Mark 6:30) the exiled Jerusalem (v. 2), healing the sick (v. 3) and then in verse 8, for causing grass to spring up on the mountains, and green herbs for the service of men (ἐξανατέλλοντι ἐν ὄρεσι χόρτον καὶ γλὼν τῇ δουλείᾳ τῶν ἀνθρώπων, Ps 146:8, LXX).

Mark's appropriation of (Isaian) creation motifs does not, however, rest simply on verbal parallels of γλωρῶ χόρτῳ, but the whole idea of a new exodus and the eschatological victory in the wilderness carries a cosmic struggle (or rather, a victory) as backdrop, clearly in Isaiah, and implied in Mark. In Mark 6, the pericope after the wilderness feeding presents Jesus as "ἐγὼ εἰμι" (v. 50, cf. Isa 41:4b⁵⁶³). Jesus is presented with power over the wind and the sea (as in the first sea-crossing in 4:39 where Jesus "rebuked/ἐπετίμησεν" the storm, as YHWH rebuked the sea of chaos. Cf. Ps 105:9 LXX).⁵⁶⁴ Isaiah 51:14-15 reads:

The oppressed shall speedily be released; they shall not die and go down to the Pit, nor shall they lack bread. For I am the Lord your God, who stirs up the sea so that its waves roar – the Lord of hosts is his name.

If the author of Mark had this passage in mind, it would fit very well in the series of narratives in Mark 6: first a comforting promise that prisoners will not meet death (as the prisoner John the Baptist did in 6:27), then the promise of provision of bread (as realised through Jesus in 6:41-42)

⁵⁶³ "I, the LORD – with the first of them and with the last – I am he/ἐγὼ θεὸς πρῶτος καὶ εἰς τὰ ἐπερχόμενα ἐγὼ εἰμι", NIV/LXX).

⁵⁶⁴ Several commentators point to similarities with the story of Jonah. However, it is somewhat awkward to take Jonah as role model for Jesus. More likely, the passage in Isaiah where the prophet calls YHWH to wake up and show his power (see below), is evoked in Mark 4:35-41.

followed by a demonstration of Jesus' power over the wind and the sea (demonstrated by Jesus' walking on water in 6:48).⁵⁶⁵

In Isa 51:9-10, the prophet calls on YHWH:

Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the LORD! Awake, as in days of old, the generations of long ago! Was it not you who cut Rahab in pieces, who pierced the dragon? Was it not you who dried up the sea, the waters of the great deep; who made the depths of the sea a way for the redeemed to cross over?

It can be noted that "Awake, awake" has interesting similarities with the narrative in Mark 4:35-41 where Jesus rebukes the sea, after the disciples woke him up (v. 38). Rahab refers to the sea monster (derived from Canaanite mythology) representing the powers of chaos, defeated by YHWH the creator (cf. Isa 27:1; Ps 89:10-13; 74:14; Job 40). The defeat of the sea-monster is related to the foundational narrative of liberation through the Red Sea. As YHWH the creator controls and defeats the primordial sea of chaos, he also controlled the Red Sea in order to liberate his people on earth.⁵⁶⁶ The cosmic/heavenly sphere is analogous with the earthly sphere. In Mark, as in Isaiah, YHWH's/Jesus' cosmic lordship over chaos and all creation is the theological fundament for the future restoration and liberation of his people, and his creation, making the desert into a lavish garden. Here, we can point out the interesting correspondence between Jesus and Pan: as Jesus has a deputy role to YHWH in the cosmic battle against evil powers (of chaos) in the gospel of Mark, Pan has a deputy role in Zeus' battle against the cosmic monster Typhon in Greek myth.

In sum, the wilderness has a geo-theological significance in Mark that recalls the rich theology of the wilderness theme in Jewish tradition, especially from Isaiah. Here as eschatological staging ground of a new exodus, led by a shepherd through the wilderness, and a renewal of Israel and all creation, played out in the desert. This points to that Mark identifies Jesus as (the agent of) YHWH the creator with a cosmic scope. The scene in Mark 6:45-52, as well as the feeding scene, present Jesus as creator and cosmic ruler, or with Philo's word, the shepherd of the universe. At the

⁵⁶⁵ "περιπατῶν ἐπὶ τῆς θαλάσσης" in 6:48 might also evoke the Greek text of Job 9:8 "the one that stretches out the heavens alone, and walks on the sea as if it was dry land"/"ὁ τανύσας τὸν οὐρανὸν μόνος καὶ περιπατῶν ὡς ἐπ' ἐδάφους ἐπὶ θαλάσσης". The context in Job emphasises God's role as sovereign creator and power over the cosmic sea-monster, as in Isaiah.

⁵⁶⁶ "The creation of Israel, according to the prophet, was a historical witness to what Yahweh is on the verge of doing in the present", Bernard Anderson comments (*Creation*, 20).

same time, Mark's narrative works on the earthly, historical, and material level, reflecting a political situation under the rule of Roman Empire, its rulers, and gods.

4.5 Banquet of Death versus Banquet of Life

So far, we can conclude that the feeding story in Mark 6:30-44 depicts Jesus as the promised good shepherd, with several parallels to the shepherd motif and sub-motifs in Jewish textual tradition. As several interpreters observe, Jesus' banquet is also contrasted to Herod's banquet in the preceding pericope. If Psalm 23 is echoed in Mark's banquet, then "you prepare a table for me in the presence of my enemies" (Ps 23:5) would likely allude ironically to Herod who just had murdered Jesus' cousin and served his head like a dish on a plate. The prophetic promise to send a new shepherd to deliver Israel is, as we saw, preceded by a judgement over the wicked shepherd/ruler. As in 1 Enoch, apocalyptic speculations in Second Temple Judaism were largely triggered by persecution and social oppression, and the expectations of a coming shepherd-messiah/king bringing judgement and restoration. While this took a cosmic scope, it also reflects social, religious, and political conflicts. In the matrix of the Jewish prophetic and apocalyptic texts, the bad shepherd, that is, the wicked shepherd/king of Israel, has its obvious counterpart in Herod Antipas in Mark 6.

On a literal level, several parallels between the pericopes (6:14-29 and 30-44) strongly suggest an intercalation. The statement in 6:31 "they did not even have a convenient time to eat/οὐδὲ φαγεῖν εὐκαίρουν" recalls Herodias' "convenient day of opportunity/ἡμέρας εὐκαίρου" in 6:21.⁵⁶⁷ Herod "commanded" (ἐπέταξεν) his guard to bring John the Baptist's head (6:27), which was then given (δίδωμι) to the girl, who in turn gave it to her mother. Jesus also "commanded" (ἐπέταξεν) the disciples to make the people sit down, and Jesus gave (δίδωμι) the food to the disciples, who in turn distributed it to the people (6:41). The contrast between Jesus' food (bread and fish) and the "food" served at Herod's banquet (John's head) is ironic in its grotesqueness. Even the "picking up the pieces" (ἦραν κλάσματα) by the disciples in 6:43 has its parallel in the "picking up his dead body" (ἦραν τὸ σῶμα αὐτοῦ) by the disciples of John in 6:29. The judgement in Ezekiel: "Should not shepherds feed the sheep? You eat the fat; you clothe yourselves with the wool; you *slaughter the choice animals*,

⁵⁶⁷ Collins, *Mark*, 318.

but you do not feed the sheep” would fit the depiction of Herod in Mark’s narrative. Moreover, Herod “sends” (ἀποστέλλω) emissaries both to arrest John the Baptist (6:17), and then to have him beheaded (6:27). Jesus’ sending (ἀποστέλλω) the disciples before the story of Herod’s banquet (6:7-13), the rendering of the disciples as ἀπόστολοι (6:30, the only instance in Mark), and the disciples (apostles) continuing mission in the feeding story as delegates of Jesus, contrasts with Herod’s sending of his apostles/delegates. Jesus the good shepherd takes care of the flock by teaching and feeding them abundantly, whereas Herod is irresponsible, lacks moral integrity, and brings death instead of life.⁵⁶⁸ The *scenes* of the two banquets are likewise contrasted, as George puts it:

Ironically, in Jesus’ banquet, the wilderness, a place of death and emptiness turns out to be a place of order, life and abundance. On the other hand, King Herod’s house (palace) a place supposed to be of governance and justice becomes one of terror and negligence.⁵⁶⁹

In the prophetic visions, the promised salvation is painted as an eschatological banquet, as in Isa 25:6 (“On this mountain the Lord of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of rich food, a banquet of well-aged wines, of rich food filled with marrow, of well-aged wines strained clear” and in Joel 2:22-26b:

Do not fear, you animals of the field, for the pastures of the wilderness are green; the tree bears its fruit; the fig tree and vine give their full yield. O children of Zion, be glad, and rejoice in the Lord your God, for he has given the early rain for your vindication; he has poured down for you abundant rain, the early and the later rain, as before. The threshing floors shall be full of grain; the vats shall overflow with wine and oil. I will repay you for the years that the swarming locust has eaten, the hopper, the destroyer, and the cutter, my great army that I sent against you. You shall eat in plenty and be satisfied and praise the name of the Lord your God, who has dealt wondrously with you. And my people shall never again be put to shame.

In Jeremiah 31 likewise, the scene clearly entails abundance (of food) and festivity, but interestingly also dancing. “The young woman will dance” (31:13), and the intoxication (μυθύσκομαι, LXX) from wine (cf. Isa 25:6) is part of Herod’s party rather than of Jesus’, whereas the abundance of (simple) food to ordinary people, and the lushing green pasture and

⁵⁶⁸ George, *Metaphor*, 75-76.

⁵⁶⁹ George, *Metaphor*, 76 note 170.

flowering (Jer 31:4a; 12b) of the desert is pronounced in Jesus' banquet. I conclude that Mark's juxtaposition of these two banquets, and the two "shepherds", is presented as two alternative (and competing) embodiments of "shepherds" and royal banquets held by two very different kings and representing two different kingdoms. Herod's banquet, as well as his kingship expresses in Mark's rhetoric – using subtle hints – a parody of the prophetic visions, thus creating a sense of perverted realization of the awaited kingdom of God; a luxurious feast where only the nobles and aristocrats are invited (Mark 6:21), and with a lavish menu paid with the produces from the highly taxed peasants of Galilee, and a dancing girl evoking sexual entertainment and a responding "incestuous pleasure" from Herod.⁵⁷⁰

4.6 Summary of the Shepherd Motif in Jewish Texts

To summarize this far, we can see that Mark's Jesus' care for the "sheep without shepherd" alludes to the shepherd motifs in the Hebrew Bible. Mark's presentation draws together several sub motifs and shepherd activities of both YHWH the shepherd of Israel, the promised shepherd Messiah, and judgement over wicked rulers/shepherds and idols. The wilderness area, pronounced in Mark's feeding story, most likely recalls the theme of a new exodus and a future renewal of Israel and all creation foremost from Isaiah. The emphasis on YHWH's/Jesus' cosmic lordship of all creation ties the theme of fruitfulness and bounty in the feeding story to Jesus' power over the sea in the succeeding pericope. A later development in Second Temple Judaism applies "shepherd" to God as universal/cosmic ruler. Mark's use of shepherd motifs clearly draws on its uses in Jewish scriptures and tradition, but his gospel is written in a cultural milieu where Jewish traditions to a large extent were and had been in conversation with non-Jewish ideas. Several points of comparison between Jesus and Pan can tentatively be pointed out, most obvious in their role as shepherd-figures. The wilderness/mountainous geographical scenes, the theme of fruitfulness of nature, and their import as cosmic lord of nature. In our overview of the shepherd motif in Jewish texts, we saw that idolatry and false gods is recurrently addressed in these contexts. Mark's general emphasis on exorcism of demons – specifically related to the ministry of the twelve in 6:6-13 casting out many demons/δαιμόνια πολλά ἐξέβαλλον

⁵⁷⁰ Collins, *Mark*, 308-309.

– suggest that the shepherd motif drawn from Jewish tradition evoked that the new promised shepherd would entail a confrontation with false gods (demons, that is). This would put Pan in opposition to Jesus. As we proceed to examine possible similarities between the shepherd-gods Jesus and Pan in Mark, we need to turn our focus to the Greco-Roman cultural environment where “shepherd” likewise carried various and significant meaning. To tease out possible connections between Jesus and Pan, I will in the following part of this chapter explore Mark’s representation of Jesus (and Herod) as shepherd-king pretenders in the context of the Roman Imperial ideology in Roman Palestine.

4.7 Mark’s Shepherd Jesus versus Imperial Powers

Mark’s juxtaposition of “shepherd-king” Herod’s lavish banquet for the ruling elite, and shepherd Jesus’ wilderness feeding for the people clearly serves as critique of the oppressive power, in continuity with Israel’s history of being subdued and oppressed by a long succession of empires. The shepherd motif and the miraculous wilderness feeding, undoubtedly resonated with myths, figures, and symbols in Greek and Roman culture and traditions. I will continue this analysis with an overview of the shepherd motif in Greco-Roman literature and the function of pastoral deities in Roman bucolic literature, which served as imperial propaganda in late republic and early imperial time.

In Roman literature, the metaphoric use of “shepherd” is ambiguous and is rarely applied to rulers. In general, shepherd as an occupation seems to have attained a negative association, that might have rendered the epithet inappropriate or even offensive for the Roman emperors. “Shepherd” has, at least in some sources, a pejorative connotation: low in social status, violent, suspect of robbery, and even murderous.⁵⁷¹ This often-held general notion of shepherds as stigmatized and despised has faced several interpreters with the question of how it is to be understood that the New Testament authors use shepherd motifs without hesitation.⁵⁷² It would

⁵⁷¹ Baxter, *Mathew’s Shepherd*, 137-139; Kloppenborg and Callon, ‘Parable’. Baxter refers to Livy (*Ab Urbe*. 1.4.9; 1.5.7; 5.53.8-9; 39.29.9), Seneca the Younger (*Ep.* 47.10.7), Velleius Paterculus (*Hist.* I, 2.1-2). Kloppenborg and Callon also refer to Livy, but also Diodorus Sic. (34/35.2.27-30), to show the shepherds association with bandits and robbery.

⁵⁷² Harris criticizes the common view held by e.g. F. Godet, J. Jeremias and C. H. Talbert, that shepherds, based on evidence from Talmud and Mishna (*m. Kidd.* Iv.14; b. *Sanh.* 25b) were considered sinners in first century Palestine. Harris points to the late date of these texts, and that they do not necessarily represent a common “Jewish” position, and that other texts with positive connotations are not properly considered. See Harris, *Davidic Shepherd*, 52-59. Baxter’s analysis suggests an idealized shepherd image in Second Temple Palestinian Judaism (with few exceptions), and a mixed use of “shepherd” in Philo and Josephus, perhaps due

seem odd and not very persuasive in the context of the first-century Roman world. Baxter suggests that the depiction of Jesus as Shepherd

may allow the author [...] to present Jesus in an overtly political manner [...] that contrasts with his Roman counterpart. In other words, the emperor of Rome is a distant, ruling king but not a close, personal shepherd like Jesus, who exercises divine ruling authority but remains his people's caring shepherd.⁵⁷³

This might very well be a valid point, but the evidence presented for establishing a general view among Romans (elites?) or a Jewish Palestinian view or a Jewish diaspora view, seems more ambiguous than univocal. It seems that a low regard of shepherds among Roman writers (and possible among people in general, though the risk of projecting elite sentiments onto the general should be considered) is primarily due to material conditions and actual experiences. The movement from small family based estates to larger farming units (see 2.3.1) made hired shepherds increasingly the most typical shepherd.⁵⁷⁴ Moreover, the fact that shepherds were moving across marginal areas, unsupervised and armed, says Kloppenberg and Callon “help[s] to account for the fact that shepherds in antiquity were stigmatized figures, often associated with bandits and agitators”, and further “mobility and weapons of shepherds afforded them the means and opportunity for theft; and the wages typically paid to herdsmen made forms of criminality a temptation if not a necessity.”⁵⁷⁵ Another material aspect that might be in play here, is the increase of monoculture cash-crop farming to meet the needs of the expanding Empire. In the expansion of the Empire in notably northern Africa – the breadbasket of the Roman Empire – more land was secured for grain crop. This development collided with indigenous herding cultures. Grazing animals, and by implication herdsmen, is indeed a threat

to the diaspora context of their writing (Egypt and Rome, where the vocation was held in low regard, according to Baxter). The prevailing negative attitude among Romans, is thus contrasted with Jewish and Christian attitude, in Baxter's analysis. (Baxter, *Mathews Shepherd*, 127-133.) Harris finds in Philo no pejorative view of “shepherd”. (Harris, *Davidic Shepherd*, 59.) Kloppenberg and Callon suggests that the use of shepherd (in the parables) in Matthew and Luke is for apologetic reasons “far removed from actual shepherds” to avoid negative connotations when applying “shepherd” to Jesus and God. Thus a “biblicized” and idealized shepherd was applied (in Matthew): “Matthew was able to distance the figure of the shepherd in the parable from any potential stigma incurred by knowledge of actual shepherds.” (Kloppenberg and Callon, ‘Parable’, 240, 247.) And in Luke, the author “offers a romanticized picture of the countryside and its habitants” (p. 250). Thus, according to Kloppenberg and Callon, Luke's perspective represents the “educated sub-elites” (p. 251). The countryside is for Luke, as it is for the bucolic writers, a peaceful and “idyllic space” (p. 253).

⁵⁷³ Baxter, *Mathews Shepherd*, 142.

⁵⁷⁴ Huebner, Sabine R. *Papyri and the Social World of the New Testament*. Cambridge University Press, 2019. 123-125.

⁵⁷⁵ Kloppenberg and Callon, ‘Parable’, 228, 230.

to crop farming. In legislation documents, the responsibility for shepherds causing damage to farmers field, is stipulated.⁵⁷⁶ The conflict between herding and farming is universal due to the fact that herding animals eat the field crops intended for humans if they get the chance. Varro makes a clear distinction between cultivation of crops and herding, but at the same time emphasizing the beneficial connection between the two.⁵⁷⁷

On the other hand, despite the (presumed) negative connotation and social stigma of shepherds (at least from the perspective of the elite, who would be the most likely to distance themselves from shepherds), the idea of an exemplary, and idealized shepherd was not out of sight in Roman times. In fiction, as Kloppenberg and Callon observes, “the shepherd was either dramatically villainized or unrealistically idealized.”⁵⁷⁸ In Early Roman Imperial poetry, the shepherd’s life is clearly idealized.⁵⁷⁹ Even at a material level, shepherds can be described in positive manner with (ideally) good characteristics, as in Varro and Columella when recommending suitable (characteristics of) slaves for herdsman.⁵⁸⁰ In the context of his practical manual for herding, Varro also emphasise the origin of the Roman people from shepherds, and that Romulus and Remus were themselves shepherds.⁵⁸¹ Varro even greets himself with the Homeric “shepherd of the people” (ποιμένα λαῶν), and thus, according to Spencer, “connecting a pastoral pre-Roman world to the big names of Trojan epic, and making Varro (and his farming manual) a homERICALLY flavoured guide for configuring a new world.”⁵⁸² Dio Chrysostmos, writing at approximately the same time as Mark, comments on Homer’s depiction of Agamemnon as the ποιμένα λαῶν:

Now it seems to me that Homer was quite right in this as in many other sayings, for it implies that not every king derives his sceptre or this royal office from Zeus, but only the good king, and that he receives it on no other title than that he shall plan and study the welfare of his subjects ... becoming indeed a guide and shepherd

⁵⁷⁶ Huebner, *Papyri*, 123.

⁵⁷⁷ Varro, *Rust.* 2.4-5.

⁵⁷⁸ Kloppenberg and Callon, *Parable*, 238.

⁵⁷⁹ Huebner, *Papyri*, 117.

⁵⁸⁰ Varro, *Rust.* 2.10.1-5; Columella, *De Rust.* 7.3.26. In Tacitus, *Annales*, XII, 51, shepherds, it is told, rescue and take care of a pregnant woman (the wife of King Radamistus) from drowning in a river. The positive portrayal of the shepherd’s virtuous action is, according to Baxter, “a narrative device to convict Tacitus’ Roman readers with its ‘shock value’”, in the same way as the good Samaritan functions in Luke 10:30-35. (*Mathew’s Shepherd*, 139-141.)

⁵⁸¹ Varro, *De Rust.* 2.1.9.

⁵⁸² Spencer, Diana. *Roman Landscape: Culture and Identity*. (New Surveys in the Classics No 39). Cambridge University Press, 2010. 59. See Varro, *De Rust.* 22.5.1.

of his people, not, as someone has said, a *caterer and banqueter at their expense*. (Dio Chrys. *Orat.* 1.12-13, italics mine.)

Elsewhere, Dio Chrysostom describes bad rulers – tyrants – as butchers, the anti-type of a caretaking good shepherd. Tyrants, he says, are slaves to pleasure and destroy their own people.⁵⁸³ Dio Chrysostom's use of the motif comes close to Mark's juxtaposition between Jesus as good shepherd, and Herod's banquet of death.

4.7.1 Roman Pastoral Literature

The idyllic outdoor meal, as we saw in Mark, has parallels in Greek and Roman pastoral literature. However, not simply as static scenery but rather as part of an ideological narrative. Utopian banquets and visions of nutritional abundance are common in Greco-Roman culture and are relevant for the context of New Testament texts.⁵⁸⁴ In the flourishing of pastoral literature in late Roman republic and Augustan time, the shepherd, and shepherd-related deities, notably Pan/Faunus, played a prominent symbolic role as part of the Golden Age ideology of peace, harmony, and fruitfulness. Not only did the shepherd and shepherd deities as figures serve this role, but so did the rural idyllic landscape, in which they belonged, often representing the shepherd as a liminal figure negotiating and mediating between city and country and fundamentally between culture and nature.⁵⁸⁵ In the following, I will highlight examples from the pastoral literature with motifs relevant for comparison with Mark's depiction of Jesus. As we will see, the flourishing of the desert, the miraculous abundance of food, and the shepherd placed in a bucolic setting has several equivalents in Roman pastoral literature.

The birth of Augustus and his reign is expressed in the pastoral literature (as well as in other texts and media) as the coming Golden Age. In Virgil's fourth *Eclogue*, it is expressed in ecological terms, as bounty and fruitfulness, very similar to visions of the coming messianic age in Jewish eschatological expectations:

But for you, child, the earth untilled will pour forth its first pretty gifts, gadding ivy with foxglove everywhere, and the Egyptian

⁵⁸³ Dio Chrys. 3 *Regn.* 40-41; 4 *Regn.* 44.

⁵⁸⁴ Smit, Peter-Ben. *Fellowship and Food in the Kingdom: Eschatological Meals and Scenes of Utopian Abundance in the New Testament*. Vol. 234. Mohr Siebeck, 2008. 35-62. See also, Neutel, Karin B. *A Cosmopolitan Ideal: Paul's Declaration 'Neither Jew Nor Greek, Neither Slave Nor Free, Nor Male and Female' in the Context of First-Century Thought*. Vol. 513. Bloomsbury Publishing, 2015. 42-44.

⁵⁸⁵ Howatson, Margaret C. (ed.) *The Oxford Companion to Classical Literature*. OUP Oxford, 2013. 'Pastoral poetry'. Spencer, *Roman Landscape*, 4-15.

bean blended with the laughing briar; unbidden it will pour forth for you a cradle of smiling flowers. Unbidden, goats will bring home their udders swollen with milk, and the cattle will not fear huge lions. The serpent, too, will perish, and perish will the plant that hides its poison; Assyrian spice will spring up on every soil. But as soon as you can read of the glories of heroes and your father's deeds, and can know what valour is, slowly will the plains yellow with the waving corn, on wild brambles the purple grape will hang, and the stubborn oak distil dewy honey. (4.18-30)⁵⁸⁶

The striking parallels to Isaiah, notably 11:6-9, the prophesy of a birth of a child who will bring about a new Golden Age (cf. Isa 9:6f), and the "serpent will die", made the fourth *Eclogue* attractive to later Christian interpretations in which Virgil as seer prophesied the birth of Christ and his coming kingdom.⁵⁸⁷ This suggests that Virgil had access to Jewish messianic ideas via the LXX, or perhaps more likely, the *Sibylline Oracles*, (iii. 743-59), as Wallace-Hadrill suggests. He says that the *Eclogue* "only makes sense against the background of the volatile political atmosphere of triumviral Rome, in which prophecies and oracles circulated freely."⁵⁸⁸ He concludes that "The fourth Eclogue, written at a moment of acute political instability, is a poetical realization of widespread attitude, that the solution lay no longer in republican institutions, but in a Messiah."⁵⁸⁹ Clausen's annotation on Virgil's *Eclogues* points out Virgil's use of the old Hesiodic Golden Age idea, though not as a lost mythical paradise, but as an inaugurated new order of time, now coming, that coincides with the birth of a child.⁵⁹⁰

The motif of fecundity runs through the poem; the earth spontaneously (without the labor of tilling/cultivating), and supernaturally, brings forth different plants and flowers, sheep with "swollen udders" voluntarily bring home abundance of milk. Honey runs out from oaks. Cattle live in harmony with the lions, strongly reminiscent of Isaiah's vision of the peaceable kingdom (Isa 11:6; 65:25). It is worth noting here that the idea of making peace with wild animals, a common idea in Jewish messianic

⁵⁸⁶ English translation *LCL*. Virgil wrote in Latin, but Greek translations were most likely available by the time of Mark's gospel. "Reports of Greek translations of Virgil go back to the first century CE" (Braund, Susanna, and Zara Martirosova Torlone. (eds.), *Virgil and his Translators*. Oxford University Press, 2018. 136-150.)

⁵⁸⁷ E.g. Lactantius *Div. Inst.* VII. 24 and Augustine *De Civ. Dei* X. 28. See also Clausen, Wendell Vernon. *A Commentary on Virgil, Eclogues*. Oxford University Press, 1994. 126-129.

⁵⁸⁸ Wallace-Hadrill, Andrew. 'The Golden Age and Sin in Augustan Ideology'. *Past & Present* 95.1, (1982): 19-36. 21.

⁵⁸⁹ Wallace-Hadrill, 'Golden Age', 36.

⁵⁹⁰ Clausen, *Eclogues*, 121.

expectations (see e.g., Philo, *Praem* 87-90; 2 Bar 73:6), is acted out by Jesus in the wilderness temptation story in 1:13, as convincingly argued by Richard Bauckham.⁵⁹¹

The fertility progresses, in Virgil's fourth *Eclogue*, as the boy grows older. As the poem continues, and the child matures, the Golden Age of perfect harmony develops. "Virgil imagines a restoration of that golden time coincident with the birth and early manhood of the boy", Clausen comments. Even the merchants can quit buying and selling, since the earth produces everything spontaneously:

Next, when now the strength of years made you a young man, even the trader will quit the sea, not will the ship of pine exchange wares; every land will bear all fruits. Earth will not suffer the harrow, nor vine the pruning hook; the sturdy ploughman, too, will now loose his oxen from the yoke. (Lines 37-41)

In lines 48-52, Virgil addresses the child as divine, an offspring of the gods (*cara deum suboles*):

O enter upon your high honours – the hour will soon be here – dear offspring of the gods, mighty seed of Jupiter to be! See how the world bows with its massive dome – earth and expanse of sea and heaven's depth! See how all things rejoice in the age that is at hand!

The identity of the child in Virgil's poem, in its contemporary context, has been much debated (Octavian was likely not yet perceivable as the future Augustus).⁵⁹² What matters here is that the divine child in the fourth *Eclogue* was in retrospect identified as Augustus.⁵⁹³ In the *Aenid*, written later, in a time when Augustus in fact had "brought peace" and was installed as emperor, Virgil declares:

This is the man, this is the one, whom you have long been promised, Augustus Caesar, child of a god, founder of the golden ages again in Latium through the fields once ruled by Saturn. (6.791-792)

Augustan Golden Age propaganda was also expressed by other Roman poets. Horace was commissioned by Caesar Augustus to write a hymn for the Secular Games in 17 BCE, in which the splendour of Augustan Rome is celebrated, and virtue and pious devotion to the gods ensure continuous

⁵⁹¹ Bauckham, Richard. *Living With Other Creatures: Green Exegesis and Theology*. Authentic Media Inc, 2011. Ch. 5. See also 5.2.1.

⁵⁹² Clausen, *Eclogues*, 125.

⁵⁹³ Wallace-Hadrill, *Golden Age*, 21-22.

peace, harmony and fruitfulness. The renewal of nature and the harmonious rural life are major features:

Let Earth that is fruitful in crops, and cattle, adorn our Ceres with garlands of wheat-ears: and may Jupiter's life-giving rain and breezes ripen the harvest. [...] Now Faith and Peace and Honour and ancestral Decency and slighted Virtue venture to return, and blessed Plenty appears once more with her brimming horn. (Horace, *Carmen Saeculare*, English translation A. S. Kline, 2005.)

Prosperity, peace, morality, and the fruitfulness of nature go hand in hand, as it does in Jewish thinking, as we have seen.

After a long period of civil wars, Octavian stood as the sole ruler and as Caesar Augustus he inaugurated the new imperial era of peace. After his victory over Spain, the senate consecrated in 9 BCE an altar of peace (*Ara Pacis Augustae*), decorated with

copious foliage of its lower frieze to the gracefully sculpted goddess, seated with fruit and corn overflowing from her lap, holding two babies who clutch at the food and her breast, and surrounded by grazing animals – all indicators of the opulence and fertility which connect the stability of the principate to the *aura aetatis* [i.e., the Golden Age, my remark].⁵⁹⁴

This imagery of fecundity and abundance associating the emperor with the return of a Golden Age is famously repeated in Augustus' wall paintings, garden designs, and coins, as the pictorial counterpart to the Augustinian pastoral poetry, epitomized in the fourth *Eclogue*.⁵⁹⁵ Robert Jewett makes the same point, and comments on the *Ara Pacis* design: "New Plants are invented to depict the paradisiacal conditions of a world made truly new, while the organization of plants and animals in rows and ranks conveys the new, hierarchical order."⁵⁹⁶ Note the similarity to the organization of the crowd in "garden beds" in Mark's wilderness feeding. The peace altar, as an artistic embodiment of the Golden Age, represented the renewal of time and of abundant and blessed life, a blessing formerly enjoyed by the Golden Race of humanity (the primordial state of innocence and peace

⁵⁹⁴ Evans, Rhiannon. 'Searching for Paradise: Landscape, Utopia, and Rome'. *Arethusa* 36.3 (2003): 285-307. 301.

⁵⁹⁵ Kellum, Barbara A. 'The Construction of Landscape in Augustan Rome: The Garden Room at the Villa ad Gallinas'. *The Art Bulletin* 76.2 (1994): 211-224; Evans, 'Searching for Paradise', 302; Zanker, *Images*, 172-183.

⁵⁹⁶ Robert Jewett, 'The Corruption and Redemption of Creation: Reading Rom 8:18-23 Within the Imperial Context.' In Horsley, Richard A. (ed.), *Paul and the Roman Imperial Order*, 25-46. Bloomsbury Publishing, 2004. 29.

with nature and in society) drawn from Hesoid's *Works and Days*. This renewal of life was produced by "the renewal of traditional religious practices and moral values".⁵⁹⁷ I suggest that a similar ideological pattern was held in various strands of Jewish eschatological thought, including Mark's gospel, as a particular instance of how the renewal of time, life, and religious tradition was envisioned. The theme of fruitfulness is in Mark 6 combined with the pastoral setting, the orderly rows of garden beds/people, and the shepherd motif, show strong similarity to the imperial propaganda seen in the Roman pastoral poetry and the vivid imagery of the emperor as guarantor of fruitfulness. That divine legitimization of the ruler is the guarantee for the order of cosmos and society was commonly held both in Jewish royal ideology and Roman Imperial ideology.

The shepherd motif had further functions in the Roman pastoral poetry as ideological propaganda for the Golden Age of the empire, in which Pan plays an important role. According to Eric Orlin, one of the tasks facing Augustus and his new empire, was to "re-establish a sense of unity amongst Romans", and "redefining what it is to be Roman". He points to the vital role of religion for ethnic identity formation, and particularly origin myths and the community's place in cosmos.⁵⁹⁸ It was thus crucial to link the present to the "deep" origins of the Roman past. Tammy Di-Giusto states that "[r]epresentations of Faunus [identified or synchronized with Pan, my remark] linked Romans with their past, their legendary origins, the landscape and in particular the rustic countryside they so idealised".⁵⁹⁹ Pan as the Greek arcadian shepherd-god figures frequently in Roman pastoral literature. These authors reinterpret ancient Greek stories, such as Homer's (and the hero Aeneas), and the Arcadian landscape, and connect it to the Italian landscape and Rome's foundational stories and figures (e.g. Latinus, Romulus and Remus and Evander). In the *Eclogues*, a Roman version of Theocritus *Idylls*, Virgil "deploys an Arcadian perspective which features shepherds with Greek names and a Hellenistic landscape as a backdrop for discussion of Roman issues after decades of civil war", according to Spencer.⁶⁰⁰

⁵⁹⁷ Jewett, 'Corruption', 29, quoting Castriota, David. *The Ara Pacis Augustae and the Imagery of Abundance in Later Greek and Early Roman Imperial Art*. Princeton University Press. 1995.

⁵⁹⁸ Orlin, Eric M. 'Augustan Religion and the Reshaping of Roman Memory'. *Arethusa* 40.1 (2007): 73-92.74-75.

⁵⁹⁹ DI-Giusto, Tammy. *Faunus and the Fauns in Latin Literature of the Republic and early Empire*. University of Adelaide. Diss. 2016. 38.

⁶⁰⁰ Spencer, *Roman Landscapes*, 14.

In Virgil's fourth *Eclogue*, the main character is not Pan, but the divine child (understood as Augustus), the one bringing the new world order of peace and bliss. Pan does, however, show up towards the end of the poem:

I pray that the twilight of a long life may then be vouchsafed me,
and inspiration enough to hymn your deeds! Then shall neither
Thracian Orpheus nor Linus vanquish me in song, though mother
give aid to the one and father to the other, Calliope to Orpheus, to
Linus fair Apollo. Even were Pan to compete with me and Arcady
be judge, then even Pan, with Arcady for judge, would own
himself defeated. (Virgil, *Ecl.* 4.53-59)

Here, the voice of the poem is compared with Pan in authority of poetic and musical inspiration. The prophetic character of the poem suggests that the comparison with Orpheus, Apollo and ultimately Pan, relates to the power of prophetic inspiration connected to these figures. In myth it is told that Pan taught prophesy to Apollo before he was installed as the oracular deity of Delphi.⁶⁰¹

In *Eclogue* 2, Pan is depicted as good-natured, gentle, and caring, characteristics of an ideal shepherd: "Pan cares for the sheep and the guardians of the sheep".⁶⁰²

In Virgil's *Aenid*, Faunus is given a striking prominence, with a focus on his oracular and royal associations. As an inventive reconstruction of Rome's ancient foundation, Virgil places Faunus as a humanized deity in a royal bloodline – son of Saturn and father of the mythological king Latinus.⁶⁰³ Faunus is inserted in a royal genealogy that leads up to Augustus who will reinstall the Golden Age, a kingdom of peace and harmony.

Shortly later, Horace – a friend of Virgil – writes the highly influential poem *Odes*, a eulogy to Augustus. Here, we find a scene of a symposium (1.17), withdrawn from the city and set in Horace's farm, an idealized bucolic landscape (*locus amoenus*) blessed with divine favour and poetic inspiration:

Swift Faunus (*Lyceao Faunus*) often exchanges Lycaeus for
lovely Lucretilis and ever wards off fiery heat and rainy winds
from my goats. Harmlessly through the safe wood the wandering
wives of the smelly husband search for lurking arbut and clumps

⁶⁰¹ See e.g., Apollodorus, *Bibliotheca*, 1.4.1. On Pan's connection to divination and prophetic power, see Borgeaud, *Cult of Pan*, 108-109.

⁶⁰² Virgil, *Eclogues*, II, 33. See also Virgil, *Georgics*, book I, lines 20-30.

⁶⁰³ Virgil, *Aenid*, 7.45-49. See also DI-Giusto, *Faunus*, 81-90.

of thyme, nor do the female kids fear green vipers or the wolves (*lupos*) of Mars whenever, Tyndaris, the valleys and the smooth rocks of reclining Ustica have resounded with the sweet pipe. The gods protect me, my piety and inspiration are dear to the gods. Here for you from kindly horn Abundance, rich in the glories of the countryside, will pour forth to the full. Here in a withdrawn valley you will avoid the swelterings of the Dog-star and you will tell of Penelope and glassy Circe, in turmoil over one man. Here in the shade you will quaff goblets of harmless wine from Lesbos nor will Semeleian Thyoneus embroil battles with Mars, nor, as object of jealousy, will you fear that forward Cyrus lay unrestrained hands on one scarcely his equal and tear the garland that clings to your hair and your undeserving garment.

In the description of his farm, Faunus is transposed into a Latin landscape by linking the Arcadian *Lycaeus* to Italian *Lucretilis* and *Ustica*, indicating that Horace syncretised Faunus with Pan.⁶⁰⁴ Putnam observes that “the etymological juncture between *Lycae*o and *lupos* reminds us of the link between Pan and the Lupercal, the cave where the war god’s wolf suckled the twin founders of Rome.”⁶⁰⁵ However, the bestial and violent sexuality associated with the Lupercalia festival is absent from Pan/Faunus’ function in the *Ode*. Moreover, Putnam comments that

Within this geographical specificity [...] lies a magic world where both celestial and terrestrial, inanimate and animate, forms of terror are kept away from the speaker’s animals. Whenever Faunus is present, summer’s heat and the rainy winds of winter, that is to say, the extremes of seasonal hazards, bring no harm to the she-goats, neither do green snakes nor the wolves of Mars alarm the female kids. They are protected, free to roam without reprisal in search of arbutus and thymes.⁶⁰⁶

In other words, it is Faunus’ presence that ensures the abundance and fertility of Horace’s farm. Faunus is the protector of the poet’s flocks from wolves and snakes, and from the perils of nature, notably the hazardous winds.

The formulations “The gods protect me, my piety and inspiration are dear to the gods. ...horn Abundance ... will pour forth to the full” (*Odes* 1.17) and the motifs of peace and protection from enemies and the *locus*

⁶⁰⁴ DI-Giusto, *Faunus*, 70-71.

⁶⁰⁵ Putnam, Michael CJ. *Horace's 'Carmen Saeculare': Ritual Magic and the Poets Art*. Yale University Press, 2008. 15.

⁶⁰⁶ Putnam, *Carmen*, 15.

amoenus, recall Psalm 23.⁶⁰⁷ In both poems the shepherd motif and the banquet motif are combined, as it is in Mark's wilderness banquet. Interestingly, in the pericope after the wilderness feeding, Jesus overcomes the hazardous wind of the sea, (Mark 6:51).

In *Odes* 3.18, the poet writes:

Faunus, lover of fugitive Nymphs, may you go gently through my borders and my sunny fields as you go forth past the small newborns, if at the end of the year a young kid falls to you, and plentiful wine is not lacking to the mixing bowl, the friend of Venus, the ancient altar smoking with much incense. The whole flock plays over the grassy plain, when the Nones of December return for you; the festive people empty into the fields with the idle oxen; the wolf wanders among the bold lambs; for you the wild woods scatter their leaves; the ditcher rejoices in striking the earth he hates in triple time.

Here, Faunus is honoured with offering and libations, and he provides with pastoral care for the cattle, the oxen become idle, he creates peace between the wolf and lamb, and brings festivity to both the people and the flock. Green pastures of spring are unrealistically pictured in December.⁶⁰⁸ The cursed work of digging becomes easy and joyful. Even the leaves of the trees are scattered to form a carpet for Faunus, according to some interpretations.⁶⁰⁹

The *Odes* represents a good example of how the landscape was negotiated by Horace, and for Romans in general. "Most Romans, including Horace", Di-Giusto comments, "were deeply connected through such sacrifice [i.e. to Faunus] to their landscape because of their reliance on it for economic success"⁶¹⁰ and "[t]he Romans were very much aware of the dangers of the environment and the possible negative consequences for their livelihood so they needed a good relationship with the gods of the landscape."⁶¹¹ The poem depicts a real Italian countryside, on which the Romans were

⁶⁰⁷ Any intertextual dependence is difficult to sustain but should not be excluded. As we saw, Virgil (contemporary and friend with Horace) was likely in contact with Jewish texts. It is worth noting that during the Renaissance, it was common to paraphrase Hebrew Psalms into Latin metre, often using Horace poetry as role model for metre and verbal allusions. See e.g., Green, Roger PH. 'Davidic Psalm and Horatian Ode: Five Poems of George Buchanan'. *Renaissance Studies* (2000): 91-111.

⁶⁰⁸ "[This] presents an imaginative evocation of Spring in Midwinter in language appropriate to the Golden Age, the *adynata* tumbling one over the other." (Holleman, A. W. J. 'Horace and Faunus: Portrait of a 'nympharum fugientum amator''. *L'Antiquité Classique* (1972): 563-572. 568.)

⁶⁰⁹ See Di-Giusto, *Faunus*, 78. (Referring to Quinn, Kenneth. (Ed.) *Horace: The Odes*. St. Martins Press, 1980. 277).

⁶¹⁰ Di-Giusto, *Faunus*, 77.

⁶¹¹ Di-Giusto, *Faunus*, 71.

economically dependent, dressed in utopian Golden Age imagery that creates an allegorical landscape for Horace's poetical inspiration and wisdom. Faunus, himself in a close kinship with the land, has a transformative effect on the landscape, and acts as a mediator between the landscape and the Roman people, DI-Giusto points out.

Moreover, the landscape in the *Odes* works as a metaphor for poetic inspiration. "Faunus acts as agent in transforming the landscape of the Sabine farm into a *locus amoenus* for the production of Horace's poetry", comments DI-Giusto. Putnam, in his thorough literary analysis of the *Odes*, likewise points to several elements in the poem with one literary and one figurative meaning that create an "analogy between man and nature". The physical landscape is also a mental landscape: "the realm of water and shade is for Horace both literal and figurative at once. It is the landscape of the Sabine retreat, but it is also the mind of the poet and his refreshing, ennobling, instructive poetry", according to Putnam.⁶¹² If we read Mark's wilderness banquet in light of Roman pastoral literature, Jesus' teaching can be seen as a counterpart to the poetical inspiration and ability connected to the bucolic setting, the *locus amoenus*.

If we go back to the text in Mark 6, we find additional parallels to the pastoral literature. A simple meal in a pastoral setting, with green grass and shepherds is featured in Theocritus' *Idyll* 7, where an idyllic banquet is held with shepherds together with their patron-god Pan, disguised as goatherd.⁶¹³ Moreover, in Roman time, Lucretius describes a luxurious feast in silver and gold, and more generally the struggle for power, that is exceeded by a simple outdoor meal for people reclined in the green grass:

And yet, for all this, men lie in friendly groups on the soft grass near some stream of water under the branches of a tall tree, and at no great cost delightfully refresh their bodies, above all when the weather smiles on them, and the season of the year bestrews the green grass with flowers (*De Rerum Natura* 2.29-33).

These scenes have clear similarities to Mark's idyllic and simple outdoor meal, idealized and juxtaposed with Herod's luxurious banquet for the urban elite. In Mark, the good shepherd is Jesus, whereas in Theocritus', it is Pan. If we allow ourselves to push my reading of Mark's juxtaposition of the two banquet scenes a bit further, the twofold nature of Pan becomes interesting. On one hand, his features as a benign shepherd-god –

⁶¹² Putnam, *Carmen*, 39-40.

⁶¹³ See Clauss, James J. 'Once upon a Time on Cos: A Banquet with Pan on the Side in Theocritus' *Idyll* 7'. *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology*. 101 (2003): 289-302.

protecting and nurturing the flock, inspiring the prophetic, poetic, and musical, and a bringer of fruitfulness and fertility – corresponds with Jesus’ pastoral function, the bucolic/wilderness setting, his teaching/prophetic ability, and the abundant fruitfulness (fish and bread, green grass). The power over, and the protection from the threatening wind in Mark 6:45-52 corresponds to Faunus’ protection from hazardous winds in Horace’ *Ode* 1.17, and Pan’s function as “sea roamer” and his role in the myth of the defeating of the cosmic sea-monster Typhon. Herod’s luxurious banquet in the city corresponds to Pan’s bacchic features of wild festivity, intoxication, dance, and bestial sexuality.⁶¹⁴

4.8 The Two Feeding Stories in Mark’s Spatial Narrative

Before we conclude this chapter, I will shortly remark on the fact that Mark includes two feeding narratives in his gospel. The second feeding (Mark 8:1-10) is somewhat shorter and has some interesting differences vis-à-vis the first. To begin, I assume that the second feeding intentionally recalls the first, so that what is said (or implied) in the first, should call the readers’ attention. The differences, however, contrasts the two narratives, so that a rhetorical point is made by repeating or recalling the first wilderness feeding. Among the difference, the geographical setting is perhaps most interesting and significant. The first story takes place on the west side of the lake (or the sea), i.e., on Jewish soil, whereas in the second account, Jesus’ ministry has expanded to the gentile area of Decapolis, on the east side of the sea (7:31). In the first account, five loafs of bread feed five thousand peoples, and give twelve baskets of leftovers, whereas in the second, seven loafs feed four thousand and gives seven baskets/hampers (σπυρίδας) of leftovers.

The significance of the differences might be found in the discourse about the bread (8:14-21) where Jesus charges the disciples for not understanding, like he did in 6:52, after the walk on water and the stilling of the storm. In 8:19-21, Jesus interrogatively recalls for the disciples both the feeding of five thousand and the feeding of four thousand, repeating the numbers of peoples, loafs, and baskets, indicating probably that it has something to do with Jesus’ identity that the disciples (notoriously) fail to understand, and that is enigmatically implied in Mark’s narratives.

⁶¹⁴ Cf., Freyne’s interpretation of Matt 11:16-19 and the suggested allusions to Pan and Dionysus in the “piping and dancing”, discussed in 1.4.

Recognizing the various opinions on the matter, and the difficulties to provide certain evidences, I suggest nevertheless that if the twelve baskets on Jewish soil symbolise the twelve tribes, then the seven loafs and the seven baskets have something to do with creation (seven days), sabbatical eschatology, and the notion that seven refers to cosmic order (seven planets), notably in apocalyptic texts (e.g., 1-2 Enoch and Revelation), but recurring in non-Jewish traditions as well.⁶¹⁵ If this is the case, and if the eschatological renewal of creation and Jesus' lordship over creation and nature are implied in the feeding stories (and in general in Jesus' power over non-human nature in Mark), then the point with the bread and its numbers not understood by the disciples (but implied to the informed reader) might be that Jesus is the Shepherd-Messiah for the twelve tribes, but also lord of all creation, and the whole world, including the gentiles, according to the author of Mark.

4.9 Conclusion

The shepherd metaphor was appropriated by the author of Mark's gospel for his specific purposes and moulded to give it new significance in his own context. The shepherd motif in Mark brings together elements *both* from Jewish texts and from Hellenistic/Roman shepherd motifs. Jesus is depicted as the Davidic deputy shepherd promised by the prophets, to bring about the promises of the "new covenant", including gathering, leading, feeding, and deliverance from oppression.

In the broader Roman context, shepherds represented an idyllic rustic simplicity of arcadian pastoral landscape, representing the return of the Golden Age in Roman imperial propaganda. By placing Jesus' shepherding activity in the rural/wilderness setting, emphasizing the imagery of bucolic/pastoral landscape of "green pasture", reclining in "garden beds" and the abundance of bread and fish, the narrative challenges utopian banquets and visions of nutritional abundance, and evokes, or mimics common bucolic scenery in Greco-Roman literature, but replaces the shepherd-god Pan with the good shepherd Jesus. I suggest that Jesus is displayed as a contestant to Greco-Roman rural/shepherd deity (Pan/Faunus), as the *true* shepherd, and the *true* guarantor of fruitfulness, over against Pan the pagan shepherd-god in his function in imperial propaganda, as cosmic ruler, guarantor of fruitfulness, and patron

⁶¹⁵ For an extended study of the number seven in various texts and tradition, see Collins, Adela Yarbro. *Cosmology and Eschatology in Jewish and Christian Apocalypticism*. Brill, 1996. 112.

of flocks. In Mark, Jesus is the source and guarantor of abundance of food and provides a foretaste of the abundance of creation by virtue of being the divinely instituted shepherd-king.

Moreover, by juxtaposing Jesus' wilderness banquet of abundance with Herod's lavish and opulent city-banquet for the ruling elite, the author challenges Herod's depraved luxurious lifestyle and his oppressive rule, and by extension the empire and its ideological vision and claim. "The Kingdom of God" is in Mark's gospel the counterpart to the Golden Age. Both visions claim to bring abundance of food, peace, liberation, harmony, and order: cosmic, societal, moral, and ecological. These dimensions intersected with a material level as well, and the logic that a good shepherd was a prerequisite for peace and justice on a political level also made sense on an economic and ecological level: a good shepherd conforming to YHWH's laws and order of creation results in a flourishing of the land.

For real shepherds in rural areas where sheep herding was vital for the livelihood, Pan was not merely a shepherd mascot or symbol of the empire's archaic origin, but their patron deity, whom they venerated and worshipped in hope and trust for protection and fruitfulness of their flocks. Among some groups of Mark's audience, especially shepherds/herding peasants in rural areas, there could very well have been a temptation to fall into reverence of pagan gods, or an identification of Jesus with pagan deities, like the situation of identification of YHWH with Baal that the prophets reacted against (cf. Hos 2.16). Social pressure to hold on to folklore traditions should not be underestimated. As a patron god of shepherds, Pan was most likely the one to go to for securing the flocks productivity and welfare, especially in areas where the worship of Pan was prominent, as in the Paneas/Caesarea Philippi region. Mark's placing of Jesus as the good shepherd in the wilderness, in a typical bucolic setting, providing the flock with rest and food on green pastures, clearly competes with, and rhetorically eliminates the traditional shepherd god Pan in this area.

5 Pan as Satan

A comparison between Pan and Jesus has several thematic points of contact, as we have seen. Their import as, notably, shepherd, cosmic ruler of “all nature”, “sea-roamer”, and their wilderness/mountain habitat, suggest similarity. In the reception history, some of these similarities have been picked up in different times and for different reasons in the trajectory of identification: Jesus as Pan or Pan as Jesus. In this chapter, I will focus on the other thematic trajectory of Pan as antagonist, or “shadow”, to Jesus, as the demon and/or Satan. Paradoxically as it may seem, these two trajectories, or modes of comparison, can be at work at the same time, as my reading of the transfiguration story suggests. In my reading, Mark’s Jesus challenges Pan as the god of the holy mountain, and as bringer of fertility. Pan’s symbolic role in political ideology as guarantor of peace and stability in cosmos, nature, society, and life, also competes with Jesus’ role in Mark. Particularly, Jesus’ symbolic act in the visit to Caesarea Philippi challenges Pan as the patron-god of this area. At the same time, the exorcism of the panoleptic boy suggests a power-struggle where Jesus proves his authority over the power and authority of Pan, in Mark reduced to a dumb demon.

In the discourse before the transfiguration, Jesus also rebukes Satan (Mark 8:33). Also, in the beginning of Jesus’ ministry, he is tempted by Satan in the wilderness, and shortly after, he performs his first exorcism. Throughout Mark’s gospel, the struggle between Jesus and the power of Satan and demons and their “kingdom” and authority are major themes. The superior power and authority of Jesus over the spiritual sphere, and indeed the natural (ruled by cosmic powers), is again and again demonstrated in Mark’s rhetoric. In this chapter, I will examine and present a diachronic history of Pan and Pan-like figures as Satan/Demon(s) and thereafter review relevant passages in Mark in conjunction with this trajectory and explore further allusions to Pan in Mark’s narratives about Satan and demons/unclean spirits.

5.1 How Pan became Satan

Pan’s classical pictorial attributes are commonly used in depictions of Satan in Western medieval Europe and continuing in modern times up to popular culture today. Going back at least to Eusebius’ interpretation of Plutarch’s story of the death of Pan the Demon, this Greek goat-god

became an important influence in the subsequent Christian doctrinal and pictorial representation of Satan. Indeed, Christian iconography and paintings of Satan and demons show a great variety of imagery lending from Egyptian and Nubian gods, theriomorphic figures, monsters, wild men, angels, bats, and dragons to name a few.⁶¹⁶ And while it might be “too simple”, as Luther Link contends, that the “conventional notion that Pan is the main pictorial source of the Devil”,⁶¹⁷ his horns, hooves, tail, shaggy hair, and goat legs are nevertheless very common attributes of Satan, at least in Latin Europe from the eleventh century.⁶¹⁸

Alexander Kulik proposes a reconstruction of the satyr-like Devil’s early roots, which he finds in Hellenistic mythology, rabbinic legends, and early Christian texts. According to Kulik,

It seems that, not belonging completely to any of these worlds, this image emerges from a complicated literary history wherein Greco-Roman Pan, Jewish *seirim*, and other mythological figures graft themselves and their imagery around the forces of the demonic.⁶¹⁹

In his overview of Jewish images, Kulik observes that, 1. In the Hebrew Bible, the desert-demon Azazel “had goat associations through one of the possible etymologies of the name, as well as through the ritual of the scapegoats.”⁶²⁰ 2. The goat in Daniel 7-8 has possible demonic associations.⁶²¹ 3. *Seirim* (“hairy beings”, “goat”) is in LXX translated as “δαίμόνια” (Isa 13:21; 34:14) and so also (to an Syriac equivalent) in Peshitta (Lev 17:7; Isa 13:21; 34:14; 2 Chr 11:15), and later, in Vulgata (Isa 13:21) as *pilosi* “hairy”, with Jerome’s comments that they are “either incubi or satyrs or a certain kind of wild men [that] belong to the race of demons”. In later Rabbinic texts *seirim* in Lev 17:7 is rendered as demons (*Sifra* to Leviticus), so also in Deut 32:17 and Job 22:11 (*Leviticus Rabba*), and even Esau (“hairy”) in Gen 27:11 is said to be “demonic” in *Genesis Rabba* (likely based on the etymology of Esau’s name, and on Isa 13:21).

Moreover, examples of fuller descriptions of goat-like demons exist, though without the term *seirim*. In 11QApocryphal Psalms, an incantation against the night demon mentions that the demon has horns, and in *Tosefta*

⁶¹⁶ For a detailed study of Satan in pictorial art, see Link, Luther. *Devil: A Mask Without a Face*. Reaktion Books, 1995.

⁶¹⁷ Link, *Devil*, 51.

⁶¹⁸ Kulik, ‘The Devil’, 197. According to Link, “[the Devil] first appears in the ninth century with the face of Pan and in cave-man skirts” Link, *Devil*, 72.

⁶¹⁹ Kulik, ‘The Devil’, 197.

⁶²⁰ Kulik, ‘The Devil’, 199. See e.g., Lev 16:10, 26.

⁶²¹ Later developments of the motif (notably Rev 12-13) suggest this, according to Kulik (‘The Devil’, 199-200).

(Rosh ha-shannah) a fuller description of a seemingly demonic creature is found:

When I was going up to Ma'ale Adumin, I saw him lying between two rocks, and his head was like that of a cattle, his ears were like those of a goat, his horns were like those of a deer, and his tail was between his legs. When I saw him, I was frightened and fell backwards (*Tosefta Rosh ha-Shannah* 1.15).⁶²²

As Kulik correctly observes, the appearance of the creature and the sudden strike of terror/fear is very similar to descriptions of Pan in notably Euripides.⁶²³ We can add to these similarities (not observed by Kulik) also the rocky habitat of this creature (cf. "He has every snowy crest and the mountain peaks and rocky crests for his domain" in *Homeric Hymn* 19). Moreover, it is noteworthy that the Hebrew word rendered as "goat" here is not *serim*, but *gdy* meaning "kid", "young goat", or "Capricorn", i.e. the sign in the Zodiac.⁶²⁴ The connections between Pan and the Capricorn, already discussed in 2.9, is noteworthy.

According to Kulik, the clearest attestation of the ancient motif of a satyr-like demon is found in *3 Baruch*. The text of *3 Baruch* also known as *Greek Apocalypse of Baruch* has survived in a Greek and a Slavonic variant and was composed in the first to the third centuries CE, though later composition has been suggested.⁶²⁵ This apocalyptic account of a celestial tour made by Baruch guided by an *angelus interpres*, addresses questions of original sin, sources of evil and the decay of nature, related to the *Builders* (of the tower of Babylon). The protagonist in *3 Baruch*, on his celestial tour, finds in the first heaven a plain inhabited by satyrs/fauns:

And having taken me he brought me to the first heaven, and showed me a very large door. And he told me, 'Let us enter through it'. And we entered as if on wings, a distance of about 30 days' journey. And he showed me within heaven a plain. And there were men living thereon, with faces of cattle, and horns of deer, and feet of goats, and the loins of sheep. [...] But I said, 'I pray you, show me what are these men.' And he told me, 'These are those who built the tower Tower of War against God...' (*3 Baruch* 2:2-3, 7a and 3:1-5a).⁶²⁶

⁶²² English translation from Kulik, 'The Devil'.

⁶²³ *Medea* 1167-1175, quoted earlier.

⁶²⁴ Jastrow, Marcus. A Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Babli, and Yerushalmi, and the Midrashic Literature. Luzac, 1903. We cannot be certain if the meaning "capricorn" is connoted in this case, but it is possible.

⁶²⁵ Evans, Craig A. *Ancient Texts for New Testament Studies*. Hendrickson, 2005. 37.

⁶²⁶ English translation of the Greek version, from Kulik, 'The Devil'.

Without engaging in details of Kulik's interpretation of *3 Baruch*, (I direct the reader to Kulik's article), his analysis shows that the satyr-like Builders are identified as demons, or became demons, based on the features of the Builders in *3 Baruch* and in line with other rabbinic texts that represent them as demons.⁶²⁷ Secondly, Kulik shows that theriomorphic and therianthropic motifs are "widely known as demonic features" in different Jewish and gnostic traditions.⁶²⁸ Kulik concludes that "[t]he most plausible way to interpret the blind satyr-like creatures of *3 Baruch* is to understand them as the demonic forces of the lower heaven", and thus, it can "attest the missing element which may enable us to reconstruct the *ancient motif of a satyr-like demon*."⁶²⁹ This common concept of demons as inter-worldly bastards in Jewish lore, says Kulik, were also known to the Greeks, "although separately and without negative connotations: Greek daemons are either the bastards of gods and nymphs [...] or they are the spirits of the deceased heroes and the first generations of men."⁶³⁰ Among the various genealogies of Pan, he is in some the son of Hermes and the dryad (wooden nymph) Penelope, or in other myths, son of Zeus and the nymph Hybris or Kallisto.⁶³¹

Kulik's conclusion is that

[t]he motif of the satyr-like demon must be a modification of a more general tradition of presenting demons and archons in various theriomorphic and hybrid forms. [...] This motif may either be Jewish [...] or rather a conflation of ancient biblical traditions of goat-like demons with the Hellenistic anthropomorphic but goat-legged and horned Pan and/or satyrs.⁶³²

The reception of goat-like creatures in the Hebrew Bible, developed towards a more dualistic idea of demons as evil spirits, and Satan or the Devil as the master demon (Cf., Mark 3:22-26), in subsequent Christian tradition. In Early Christianity, Satan also got a more prominent role, and appears much more frequently in the NT than in the Hebrew Bible.⁶³³ Early Christian apologetical texts and polemic defense against pagan gods generally reduce the pagan gods to demons in the sense of evil

⁶²⁷ Kulik refers to b.Sanhedrin 109a; Tanhuma Noah 28; Midrash Psalms 1.13; Midrash Aggada Gen 11:8, Sefer ha-Yashar 2.26.

⁶²⁸ Kulik, 'The Devil', 215, referring to Rev 16:13; 9:7; *Testament of Solomon* 18:1-2; b.Berakhot 6a; b.Gittin 68b; b.Hagigah 16a; *Apocryphon of John* 15-35; Origen, *Cels.* 6.30.

⁶²⁹ Kulik, 'The Devil', 225. (Italics in original).

⁶³⁰ Kulik, 'The Devil', 224.

⁶³¹ Borgeaud. *Cult of Pan*, 42, 54.

⁶³² Kulik, 'The Devil', 226.

⁶³³ Stokes, *Satan*, 202.

spirits/beings. According to Sharon-Lynn Coggan, Eusebius changes the meaning of “demon” and “Pan” from ambiguous to univocal meaning:

The terms ‘Pan’ and ‘daemon’ both stood for highly ambiguous forms and referents in Greek religious literature over a period extending from Homer down to Eusebius’ own contemporary pagan philosophers, such as Porphyry and Iamblichus. For its part, the linguistic-theological-cultural complex expressed by the title ‘Pan’ represented a well-known Greek deity who virtually embodied ambiguity, and whose character encompassed both positive and negative qualities.⁶³⁴

However, the tendency to use “demon” as a univocally evil spirit, or at least a narrower use, can be observed in Jewish apocalyptic literature, and in the New Testament, even though the picture might be more ambiguous in the New Testament, than often assumed in subsequent Christian traditions. Sometimes, Satan seems to have a role as a functionary to God serving God’s purposes (as in Job), while in other texts, he is clearly the enemy to God and God’s people, representing two opposing kingdoms.⁶³⁵

The diachronic trajectory of Pan-like demons presented above stretches from early Jewish history to the decades after the New Testament was written. Some of the presented examples rest on sources after Mark was written, and even though they might well reflect earlier ideas, we cannot take them into account for a construction of the historical context of Mark. We can, however, conclude that the Pan-Satan motif could very well have developed quite independent of Eusebius’ depiction of Pan as a/the demon exorcised by Christ, and that the Pan-Satan motif could have been on the stage in New Testament time. Thus, for my purposes, we will now focus in detail on what was present when the gospel of Mark was formed.

5.1.1 The Noonday Demon

The “noonday demon” (δαμονίου μεσημβρινοῦ, LXX Ps 90:6), an expression found in a passage in Psalm 91 is relevant in relation to Pan. English translations typically have the rather odd “the destruction/plague that wastes at noonday” (Ps 91:6) whereas in LXX it clearly refers to a demon related in some way to noon time. Interestingly, Pan was famously associated to noon time. Borgeaud states that:

⁶³⁴ Coggan, Sharon Lynn. *Pandaemonia: A Study of Eusebius’ Recasting of Plutarch’s Story of the ‘Death of Great Pan’*. (Phd Diss.) Syracuse University, 1992. 27.

⁶³⁵ Stokes, *Satan*, 203-214.

At noon one must avoid attracting Pan's attention by doing anything directly connected with his sphere [...] Those who disregard this danger expose themselves to the anger of the god, to his madness [...] noon is the moment of the day when he may invade us, dispossess us.⁶³⁶

In Socrates' prayer to Pan in Plato's *Phaedrus*⁶³⁷ the dialogue between Socrates and his disciple Phaedrus takes place at a beautiful natural spot outside the city wall of Athens, causing Socrates to declare it to be divine and himself (poetically) inspired or even possessed with the gods of the place, including Pan. The time of the day when this dialogue plays out – noon – is linked to Pan, as we saw. At the end of the scene, before leaving the spot, they agree to offer a prayer to Pan.⁶³⁸ Moreover, in the famous⁶³⁹ story in Herodotus (*Hdt.* 6.105-6), the “day runner” (ἡμεροδρόμοι) Pheidippides/Philippides ran on a command from the generals from Athens to Sparta to ask for military assistance in the war against the Persians. Passing the mountains near Tegea in Archadia, he encountered Pan in the heat of the day. H.S. Versnel comments on this story that “Even if the god would not have made himself known – as he did in a later phase – the runner knew it was Pan, because this was simply the way Pan – or the Midday Demon or Ephialtes – used to behave”.⁶⁴⁰ Thus, the place and the time of the day of the epiphany made it natural for Philippides to identify the mysterious being as Pan.

In Theocritus' *Idyll*, the goatherd sings:

Nay shepherd, nay; at noontime pipe we may not, for fear of Pan.
For then of a surety he is resting wearied from the chase. And he
is quick of temper and bitter wrath sits ever on his nostril.
(Theocritus, *Idyll* I, 15-18. English translation by A.S.F. Gow, 1952).

If the noon day demon in Psalm 90/91 was intended as an allusion to Pan is difficult to say, but readers familiar with the popular notion of Pan's association with noon time would easily make a connection.

⁶³⁶ Borgeaud, *Cult of Pan*, 111.

⁶³⁷ “Dear Pan and all you gods of this place, grant me that I may become beautiful within; and that what is in my possession outside me may be in friendly accord with what is inside. And may I count the wise man as rich; and may my pile of gold be of a size which only the temperate could bear or carry.” Plato, *Phaedrus*, 279. (English translation Christopher Rowe, 1986).

⁶³⁸ For an elaborated study of the connection between Pan and the philosophical topic of eros and logos in the dialogue, see Lavilla de Lera, Jonathan. ‘The Prayer to Pan of Plato's *Phaedrus* (279b8–c3): An Exhortation to Exercise the Philosophical Virtue’. *Symbolae Osloenses* 92.1 (2018): 65-106.

⁶³⁹ Note that this story was well known among early Christians, as for Clement of Alexandria who refers to it as common knowledge (see 1.3.2).

⁶⁴⁰ Versnel, Hendrik Simon. *Coping with the Gods: Wayward Readings in Greek Theology*. Brill, 2011. 40.

5.1.2 The King of Greece as Pan

Kulik's brief observation of the goat in Daniel 7-8, noted above, might have even closer connections to Pan than what is implied in the goat-figure. Pan's strong connection to Hellenistic rulers, particularly Antigonos Gonatas and his successors but also to Alexander the Great (see 2.9) could have inspired the Pan-demon/Satan merge in Jewish thought. The animals in Daniel 7-8 are enigmatic and have caused several suggestions as to what context they are best explained. The he-goat in Dan 8 can be understood as a symbol of power and leadership as in e.g., Zech 10:3. In Isa 14:9, the "leaders of the earth" are symbolized as he-goats. However, the general symbol of goats as powerful leaders in the Hebrew Bible does not account for the rather bizarre hybrid creatures in the context of Daniel 7-8, and the detailed symbolism of the different beasts and the horns of the ram and the goat seems to be inspired from other sources than the Hebrew Bible.⁶⁴¹ The features of the different animal creatures most likely correspond to characteristics of the kingdoms they represent.⁶⁴² Moreover, the text itself in Daniel makes clear that the animals represent earthly kings (Dan 7:17), and in particular the he-goat is said to be the "king of Greece" (Dan 8:21), most certainly Alexander the Great (the "first king", i.e. the "big horn" in 8:5, 21) and subsequent Hellenistic kings (the four succeeding horns in 8:8, 22).⁶⁴³ Why is the king(s) of Greece symbolized as a goat in Daniel 8? The connecting of Pan with Alexander, and Pan's strong status for Ptolemaic, Seleucidan, and especially Macedonian rulers, presented earlier, might provide an answer. It is very likely that the longstanding association of Pan with the Hellenistic rulers, advertised in coins, statues, paintings, hymns, and shields, would have been familiar also to the composer/writer of the book of Daniel. Palestine stood in the middle of the power battles between the rulers of Alexanders' divided empire and could not have been ignorant of the propaganda of the rulers.

While we cannot draw a definitive conclusion that the intention of depicting the king and kingdom of Greece as a goat in Dan 8:21 was the connection with Pan, it would not have been unreasonable to apply this imagery (either for the author/redactor of Daniel or in the reception of the text) – perhaps as a parodic or pejorative depiction – to allude to Pan as the important and impressive symbol for the Hellenists, and at the same

⁶⁴¹ See Lucas, Ernest C. 'Daniel: Resolving the Enigma'. *Vetus Testamentum* 50.1 (2000): 66-80.

⁶⁴² Lucas, 'Enigma', 73.

⁶⁴³ *ABD*. 'Goat'; *NJBC*. 417.

time connoting the negative and demonic association of the goatish desert demon in Jewish tradition. The discourse in Daniel concerning the theriomorphic creatures (as in Revelation 13) is certainly political but dressed in apocalyptic language and symbols in which the spiritual, religious, and cosmic scope of the battles is merged with real politics. As Ryan Stokes points out, “Israel’s subjugation to foreign powers is not merely a matter of wars between human armies, but is connected to conflicts taking place in the divine realm”.⁶⁴⁴ At heart of Jewish antipathies towards foreign powers is the idolatry of the foreign gods (and the rulers themselves!) they promoted and imposed.⁶⁴⁵

5.1.3 Azazel – the Goat Demon

Perhaps most interesting for our study, especially in relation to Mark, is Asael/Azazel. In Jewish pseudepigraphic literature, notably 1 Enoch (examined above in 3.1.5) Asael is clearly an evil/demonic being.⁶⁴⁶ Asael in 1 Enoch (elaborated on the basis of Azazel in Lev 16)⁶⁴⁷ descended on Mount Hermon, one of the main cult places of Pan, as I pointed out earlier. The meaning of the word Azazel, either as “demon” or “angry god”, and as geographical designation “precipitous place” or “rugged cliff”,⁶⁴⁸ could easily spark associations with the goat-god Pan who also was known for his anger and his rocky habitat. In Enoch 10, as we have seen, Asael is depicted as the chief criminal for all sins, but also for the desolation of the earth. He was condemned to be thrown into the wilderness, to be bound (δέω) and cast into a dark pit to lay on “sharp rocks and jugged stones”.⁶⁴⁹ This myth, I suggest, links Marks’ depiction of Satan (1:13; 3:27), and the Gerasene demoniac (5:3-4), with traditions of Pan. The associations between the sexual transgressions of the Watchers in 1 Enoch, and of Pan and his bestial sexuality, noted by Nickelsburg (See 3.1.5) enhance the

⁶⁴⁴ Stokes, *Satan*, 2.

⁶⁴⁵ See for example the view of the Hellenistic rulers in 1 Maccabean (1:9-15, 43, 47, 54-55).

⁶⁴⁶ 1 Enoch 8:1; 9:6; 10:4-8; 13:1. See also *Apocalypse of Abraham* 13:6-14; 14:4-6; 20:5-7; 22:5; 23:11; 29:6-7; 31:5.

⁶⁴⁷ While Asael and Azazel are not exactly the same, they are brought together in Qumran and other texts, due to the similarities of the names, the punishment in the desert of both, the placing of sin on Asael/Azazel, and the resultant healing of the land. (Grabbe, Lester L. ‘The Scapegoat Tradition: A Study in Early Jewish Interpretation’. *Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic, and Roman Period* 18.2 (1987): 152-167. 153-154.) See also Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch*, 192.

⁶⁴⁸ *ABD*, ‘Azazel’.

⁶⁴⁹ According to Collins, Jesus’ binding of Satan (Mark 3:27) is analogous to the binding of Asael in 1 Enoch 10:4 (*Mark*, 233). Nickelsburg points out that δέω is a “quasi-technical term for the neutralization of a demon”, and refers to Mark 3:27 and 5:3-4 (*1 Enoch*, 222-223. Cf. Rev 20:2).

probability of identifying or associating Asael/Azazel in Lev 16 and 1 Enoch with the goat-god Pan.

To summarize, we have seen that pictorial, spatial, and functional features of demonic/satanic beings in Jewish traditions show striking similarities to Pan: the physical depictions as goat, the wilderness and precipitous spatial habitat, and the portrayal as noon-day demon. Moreover, the depiction of the king(s) of Greece as a he-goat, as both spiritual and political antagonist in the apocalyptic text of Daniel, suggests an allusion to Pan as ideological and political symbol of the Hellenistic rulers, as well as the spiritual/demonic power behind the oppressive kingdom, from a Jewish perspective.⁶⁵⁰ While the Hebrew Bible can refer to pagan gods as “idols”, images of a god that does not exist more than the material representation exists, we also see a tendency to render the pagan gods as δαιμονία. This is reflected in the LXX Isa 65:11 where the god Fortune is translated as δαίμονι, and in the Psalm 95/96:5 (“ὅτι πάντες οἱ θεοὶ τῶν ἐθνῶν δαιμόνια ὁ δὲ κύριος τοὺς οὐρανοὺς ἐποίησεν/For all the gods of the nations are idols, but the LORD made the heavens” LXX/NIV). Fredriksen points out that

[t]his translation and transition from the Hebrew “idols” to the Greek “godlings” did double duty, at once elevating and demoting foreign deities. The very vocabulary granting that they were more than mere statuary nonetheless placed them, qua δαιμονία, in positions subordinate to the Jews’ ‘highest god’ on Hellenism’s own theo-cosmic map.⁶⁵¹

In the New Testament, among a variety of denotations, δαιμονία can refer to pagan gods, as in Acts 17:18 and in 1 Cor 10:20-21 (cf. Ps 106:37). Most reasonable, for the authors of the New Testament, pagan gods did exist, however not as ontologically equal to the God of Israel, and always in opposition to him. This means that we should be open to an implied understanding of demons (and Satan) as connected to (certain) pagan gods also in Mark’s narratives of Jesus’ confrontations with the demonic beings. I have already proposed that the panoleptic boy in 9:17-27 likely alludes to Pan on the basis of the geo-theological context. Together with the similarities between Pan and demonic beings presented above, we will now try a reading of other passages in Mark where Satan and demons appear, against this contextualization of the development of Pan as Satan/demon.

⁶⁵⁰ Cf., Deut 32:8-9; Dan 10:13, 21; 12;1 and Jub 15:31-32.

⁶⁵¹ Fredriksen, ‘Many Gods’, 32.

5.2 Satan and Demons in Mark

Apart from the exorcism in the passage about the pānoleptic boy already considered, Mark narrates of Jesus' encounters with Satan in the wilderness (1:12-13), Satan has a role in the parable of the Sower (4:15), he calls Peter "Satan" (8:33), he exorcizes a demon in the synagogue (1:23-27), he engages in a theological discourse about Satan's kingdom (3:22-27), he exorcizes a possessed man on the east shore of the lake (5:1-20), and a Syrophoenician woman is delivered from an unclean spirit after having encountered Jesus. Moreover, Mark has several summaries of Jesus' and his disciples' ministry of exorcism (1:34,39; 3:15; 6:7,13).

Casting out demons is clearly a significant part of Mark's depiction of Jesus, and these narratives and discourses seem to be woven into Mark's overall story to make a point about Jesus' identity, his power over the spiritual realm, and the coming of the kingdom of God, as already pointed out. Mark's focus is not so much on the demons and Satan themselves; their existence is taken for granted, and the author seems to presume a knowledge from the readers about the demonic world and the genealogy and function of these spiritual beings, not spelled out in the text. However, some clues can be derived from the text in the light of the trajectory of Pan-as-Satan/demon presented above. Of most interest for our purpose, is the scene in the wilderness where Jesus encounters Satan, and the scene of the possessed man in the gentile Decapolis area, places where Pan might be close.

5.2.1 Jesus, Pan, and Satan in the Wilderness

I have argued earlier (3.1.2), on the basis of Mark's depiction of Jesus as the coming Elijah, that Jesus' stay in the wilderness for forty days recalls Elijah's escape from Jezebel out in the desert for forty days (1 Kgs 19:1-8). Like Elijah was ministered to by the angels, so was Jesus. I have also showed that the theological motives in the broader Deuteronomistic and prophetic tradition – notably idolatry, unfaithfulness (to the covenant), adultery, and fruitfulness of the Land – correspond to the narrative in Mark. As the Deuteronomistic "hero", Elijah – the zealous representative of YHWH – operates in line with the Deuteronomistic ideology. The spiritual antagonist to Elijah (or rather to YHWH) is Baal, represented by Jezebel and the king Ahab who, against God's command (in Deut 7:3), married the Tyrian king Ethbaal's daughter Jezebel. The apostasy and wickedness of Ahab led to idolatry of Baal, seen as the height of Israel's

wickedness in the Deuteronomic narrative, and the apostasy and fall of Israel in subsequent tradition. Moreover, I have argued that the transfiguration on Hermon and the expulsion of the unclean spirit right after is a symbolic re-interpretation of YHWH's victory over Baal, and Elijah's victory over the prophets of Baal on Carmel, which makes Pan the spiritual antagonist for Jesus at this location.

If Mark presents Jesus as a type of Elijah, based in a literary mimicry of the Elijah-Elisha cycle and its theological importance, then the spiritual antagonist in the wilderness scene in Mark 1:12-13 plausible also draws the attention to Elijah's spiritual antagonist, the Canaanite god Baal. As I have shown earlier, the transfiguration story has a strong symmetry with the scenes in 1:9-13 in Mark's introduction. At both of these apocalyptic moments, the heavenly voice affirms Jesus as God's Son. Jesus' clean garments at the transfiguration is paralleled with the cleansing of his baptism. In the wilderness scene, Jesus is tempted by Satan, and shortly before the transfiguration, Jesus rebukes Satan. The introductory scenes launch Jesus' ministry, starting with the calling of disciples and immediately after, the first exorcise of an unclean spirit. After the transfiguration, Jesus exorcises the unclean spirit from the panoleptic boy, the last exorcise of his ministry in Mark. The Caesarea Philippi cycle thus marks a turning point in Mark's narrative, as we have seen. In other words, the encounter with Satan in the introduction, culminates in the transfiguration and the final expulsion of the demons right after. Geographically, Jesus' Galilean ministry begins at Jordan and the encounter with the demonic world in the wilderness, and ends at Mount Hermon, the water spring of Jordan, and the source of the perceived fertility of the Jordan valley and areas around the Sea of Galilee, as we saw.

The importance of the wilderness as a significant geo-theological space in Mark, drawn from notably the Isaian eschatological visions of a new exodus, has already been pointed out. Mark's short temptation narrative repeats and emphasises the wilderness setting.⁶⁵² The temptation is not in focus, but rather the scene, as a "wilderness tableau", a static scene that presents the "dramatis personae of the coming conflict".⁶⁵³ Jesus, the Spirit, and the angels are on one side, and the antagonist is Satan. The wild animals, however, are not on the side of Satan, as sometimes suggested.⁶⁵⁴

⁶⁵² Guelich, *Mark*, 38. France, *Mark*, 83.

⁶⁵³ France, *Mark*, 83.

⁶⁵⁴ E.g., France, *Mark*, 83. Collins, *Mark*, 151.

As noted above, the brief remark that Jesus was/dwelted with the wild beasts (καὶ ἦν μετὰ τῶν θηρίων)⁶⁵⁵ indicates a symbolic peace-making with the frightening and fallen side of nature, like the Isaian visions of a restored creation. Like Adam and Eve in the creation stories (Gen 1:28; 2:19-20) were tempted (3:1-6) while living in peace with the wild animals, so was Jesus. As Guelich points out, “Satan’s victory over the former [Adam and Eve] led to the enmity and fear within creation that was reconciled and removed by the coming of the latter [Jesus] whose victory over Satan signalled his being the new obedient Adam.”⁶⁵⁶ While animal creatures often are associated with demons and the desert (as in Isa 13:20-22), animals still belong to the good creation (Gen 1:25). Demons represent the frightening side of animals, and the barren and distorted side of nature and humans, causing illness, plagues, droughts, and natural disasters, in Mark’s Jewish context. In the wilderness scene it is Satan the leader of the demons who represents these evils, against which Jesus’ ministry works, manifested in Jesus’ healings/exorcisms, and the flourishing of the desert (Mark 6). The wilderness as geo-theological space is thus a battle ground between good and evil, between desolation and fertility of the earth.

As pagan gods had their geographical and conceptual “place”, demons were likewise connected to places (and time!), as we have seen. In other words, gods, demons, and other spiritual entities were not perceived to be randomly distributed in physical space, or somehow omnipresent in a spiritual sphere divided from the material world. Instead, they had their places. Placing Jesus’ encounter with Satan in the desert is very logical. It is Satan’s imaginary habitat. In the Greco-Roman context, the wilderness was the habitat of Pan and the nymphs, and he himself represented wild nature by being both a god and a beast. If we read Mark’s temptation story in conjunction with the popular myths and ideas about Pan, Satan could very well have been understood as Pan in the wilderness scene, suggested by the similarities between Pan and demonic beings presented above. The allusions in Mark 1:12-13 to the temptation in the wilderness encountered by the people of Israel, implies a temptation of apostasy to the goat-demons (Lev 17:7). Mark’s allusions to the Asael myth provides further connections between Pan and Satan/demons. Moreover, the Elijah typology in the wilderness temptation scene could have sparked associations to Baal, like it does in the transfiguration story, as I have

⁶⁵⁵ As Bauckham points out, ἦν μετὰ can refer to physical proximity, and has a “strongly positive sense of close association in friendship or agreement or assistance” (*Living*, 113-114).

⁶⁵⁶ Guelich, *Mark*, 39. See also Bauckham, *Living*, 115.

argued. However, since Baal was not likely a prominent contemporary deity in Mark's (and Jesus') time, the more popular but very similar god Pan would be close at hand, especially if we consider the narratives centred around Caesarea Philippi as a parallel to 1:12-13 in Mark.

At the same time, if we apply the Pan-Christ identification, Jesus *as* Pan in the wilderness shows his alliance and kinship with wild nature and the wild beasts. In a Hymn to Pan, he is honoured as "tender of wild beasts", as noted earlier. The last short remark about the attending/ministering angels would fit with the popular idea of the nymphs as Pan's entourage. Like the nymphs attend Pan, the angels attend Jesus. Thus, the Wilderness can be seen as a *contested place*, a religious competition over the dominion of the wilderness. Or more to the point, it implies a competition of who is the true god of nature and its fertility.

5.2.3 The Gerasene Demoniac

If allusions to Pan as demon can be discerned in Mark's story of the panoleptic boy, and feasibly in the wilderness (as Satan, the chief of demons), we can tentatively try this reading on the story of the Gerasene demoniac, a rather elaborated narrative with several interesting details. In this episode, Jesus debarks on the east shore of the sea and meets a man with an unclean spirit. According to some manuscripts Jesus lands in the territory of Gerasa, but Gadara or perhaps Gergesa is more realistic.⁶⁵⁷ In any case, most important for Mark is that it is in the gentile Decapolis area (cf. the conclusion of the story in 5:20). "In Mark's representation of the story", says Wilkinson, "the possessed man is to be understood as the

⁶⁵⁷ The textual variants place this episode either in Gerasa or Gadara (or Gergesa). It is very difficult to assess the evolving variants, and the choice of Gerasa in Novum is based on "superior external evidence", and that Γαδαρηνὸν is an assimilation with Matt 8:28 (Metzger, Bruce Manning. *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*. London: United Bible Societies, 1971. 84). If Mark's geography should be realistic, Gadara (or perhaps Gergesa, according to Origen) and not Gerasa would be original since Gerasa (including its vicinity) is at a too far distance from the shore of the lake (noticed already by Origen). The area of Gadara, on the other hand, stretches to the shore and is within reasonable reach of a walk from the shore (and of run for the pigs!). The lack of any steep cliff from which the pigs allegedly fell, makes Gadara problematic. It is notable that the Syriac Diatessaron has a stable tradition of Γαδαρηνὸν, that might be explained by the general reliance on Matthew, but it might also be due to a better geographical knowledge of Palestine and the unrealistic placing of Gerasa (see *ABD*, 'Gerasenes', and Baarda, Tjitze. 'Gadarenes, Gerasenes, Gergesenes and the 'Diatessaron' Traditions'. *Neotestamentica et Semitica: Studies in Honour of Principal Matthew Black* (1969): 181-97). A reason for reading Γερασηνὸν could be to connect the episode with the account in Josephus of the assault in Gerasa commanded by Vespasian during the Jewish revolt, when "thousands of young men were killed" by Roman legionnaires (*JW*, IV.ix.1). "In light of this", says Myers, "Mark's choice of 'the region of the Gerasenes' as a site of symbolic confrontation with the 'legions' takes on new and specifically political meaning" (*Binding*, 181). In any case, connections between Mark 5:1-20 and a local historical context, based on any of the readings must take the textual critical uncertainties into consideration, and Mark should not necessarily be accused for "defect geography" on the basis of a confusion in the textual tradition.

representative of the Gentile world as a whole [...] in an area of Gentile predominance which supported numerous polytheistic religious cults”.⁶⁵⁸ As several commentators observe, the spectacular story of the Gerasene demoniac is dense with symbolism and allusions to the political and cultural context, significant to Mark. Especially the military connotations protrude.⁶⁵⁹ Ched Myers notes that the place itself is significant as a “gentile socio-symbolic space”.⁶⁶⁰ The tombs and the pigs is a likely allusion to YHWH’s judgement in Isa 65:3-5 over

a people who continually provoke me to my very face, offering sacrifices in gardens and burning incense on altars of brick; who sit among the graves and spend their nights keeping secret vigil; who eat the flesh of pigs, and whose pots hold broth of impure meat.

The uncleanness of pigs and tombs strengthens the Jew-gentile contrast.⁶⁶¹ The militaristic connotations in the story, moreover, suggest political overtones, as we have seen elsewhere in Mark. The name of the demons, “λεγιῶν/legion” (5:10), is most apparent and probably alludes to the Roman legion(s) stationed in Palestine. Perhaps the pigs might have sparked associations to the boar emblem of *Legio X Fretensis*. This and other legions were stationed in Syria and Palestine during the Jewish war.⁶⁶²

The military language⁶⁶³ of the possessed herd rushing in panic to their death creates a scene of an army in flight and is very reminiscent of Pan’s typical intervention in military (enemy) troops, causing panic and the soldiers to turn towards their fellow combatants. Josephus describes one such event in the Jewish Wars:

Now, on the next night, a surprising disturbance fell upon the Romans. For whereas Titus had given orders for the erection of three towers, of fifty cubits high; that by setting men upon them at every bank he might from thence drive those away who were upon the wall; it so happened, that one of these towers fell down about midnight. And as its fall made a very great noise, fear fell upon the army; and they supposing that the enemy was coming to attack

⁶⁵⁸ Wilkinson, *Mark*, 141.

⁶⁵⁹ Boring, *Mark*, 151.

⁶⁶⁰ Myers, *Binding*, 180.

⁶⁶¹ Boring, *Mark*, 152. Myers, *Binding*, 180.

⁶⁶² *ABD*, ‘Roman Army’.

⁶⁶³ Besides the more obvious “legion”, “ἀγέλη/herd” in v. 11 can also refer to a band of military recruits, “ἐπέτρεψεν/permitted” (v. 13) can connote an order given by a military commander, and “ὄρμησεν/rushing in panic” (v. 13) over the cliff suggests a military battle charge. (Wilkinson, *Mark*, 136; Boring, *Mark*, 151.)

them, ran all to their arms. Whereupon a disturbance (ταραχή) and a tumult arose among the legions. And as nobody could tell what had happened, they went on after a disconsolate manner: and seeing no enemy appeared, they were afraid one of another: and every one demanded of his neighbour the watch word, with great earnestness: as though the Jews had invaded their camp. And now were they like people under a panic (πανικῶ) fear, till Titus was informed of what had happened, and gave orders that all should be acquainted with it. And then, though with some difficulty, they got clear of the disturbance they had been under. (*JW*, 5.7.1).

While Josephus do not mention Pan, the story has strong parallels to those where Pan is behind such interventions of fear and panic among troops (see 2.9). Cornutus explains Pan's power to induce fear, panic, and confusion, by comparison to what can happen to animal herds:

Also associated with him [Pan] are the sudden and irrational disturbances called panic-attacks (πανικᾶς ταραχᾶς): for this is how sheep and goats are frightened when they hear a sound from the wood or underground caverns and in places where there are ravines. (Cornutus, *Epidrome*, 27).

Moreover, this kind of scene appears also notably in Zech 14:13. According to the prophesy in Zechariah, in the final battle YHWH intervenes in the enemy troops by sending a great panic causing the enemies to seize and kill one another:

On that day people will be stricken by the LORD with great panic. They will seize each other by the hand and attack one another. (Zech 14:13 cf. 12:4).

καὶ ἔσται ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ ἐκείνῃ ἔκστασις κυρίου ἐπ' αὐτοὺς μεγάλη καὶ ἐπιλήμνυνται ἕκαστος τῆς χειρὸς τοῦ πλησίον αὐτοῦ καὶ συμπλακίσεται ἡ χεὶρ αὐτοῦ πρὸς χεῖρα τοῦ πλησίον αὐτοῦ (LXX).

It seems, thus, that this conception of panic among troops – generally associated with Pan – was known and used by Jewish authors, perhaps also by Mark.

As presented above, the worship of Pan in Roman Palestine was most likely spread beyond Ceasarea Philippi, notably to nearby Hippos in the Dekapolis. The shepherds (οἱ βόσκοντες, v. 14) with their grazing (βοσκομένη, v. 11) flocks in a gentile area in Mark 5 suggests already that this is the domain of Pan, the god of shepherd. However, the scene is not pastoral or idyllic. And as Bourgeaud explains, “Pan’s landscape, although

familiar to the Greeks, is all the same identified as supernatural.” These arid spaces of herdsmen “at a distance from the cultivated fields, on the mountains or along the rocky shores, represent the limits beyond which human expertise, *techne* or *sophia*, loses its hold on reality”, and further:

Pan, the god of mountains, of snow, of forests or, on the other hand, of the rocky coast or even the sea, rules the frontier of human space. To speak of his landscape is, in effect, to define a limit. To Pan belongs all that the Greeks call the *eschatai*, the “edges”.⁶⁶⁴

The geographic location outside the city, among the (cave) tombs, the hills (v. 5), the steep rocks of the shore, a herd in panic (5:13), the struck of fear (ἐφοβήθησαν, v. 15),⁶⁶⁵ and a demon possessed man out of his mind, signals the chaotic mytho-space of Pan. The political overtones of a conflict with the Roman legions (more commonly advertised with the Capricorn emblem) are in Mark paralleled with an apocalyptic cosmic battle over the demonic powers. As we saw, the binding (δέω) of Asael, and his imprisonment/burial on sharp stones, echoes the precipitous setting among tombs of the demoniac in Mark. In the cosmic battle between Raphael and Asael, Raphael’s binding of the Asael results in the healing of the earth and agricultural abundance, cleansed from “all uncleanness” (1 Enoch 10:22).

Jesus’ journey over the sea right before his debarking in gentile space had demonstrated his power over chaos, as he rebuked the wind and the raging sea. As noted earlier (4.4), the defeat of the sea(-monster) is related to the foundational narrative of liberation through the Red Sea, where Pharaoh’s army was drowned in the sea. In Job 40:26, 29 LXX, God binds (δέω) Leviathan, resulting in the (re-)establishment of the earth (41:1-2), as Collins points out.⁶⁶⁶ In Mark, the demonic Roman legion is symbolically drowned in the sea of Galilee, presenting again Jesus’ cosmic lordship over the demonic forces of chaos and of all creation. This is now demonstrated also on gentile land, inaugurating the future restoration and liberation of his people, all people (cf. Zech 14:9), and all creation, in Mark conceptualized as the “kingdom of God”.

⁶⁶⁴ Borgeaud, *Cult of Pan*, 60.

⁶⁶⁵ The struck of fear in this context is caused by the result of Jesus’ power (i.e., the restoration of the demoniac), but could still be an intended mimicry of the fear caused by Pan’s power and presence (cf. Mark 4:41; 6:50), with the rhetorical effect of presenting Jesus as more powerful and awesome than Pan. (See also 3.1.5).

⁶⁶⁶ Collins, *Mark*, 233.

5.3 Conclusions

As we already have summarized, several features of demonic beings in Jewish traditions show apparent similarities to Pan, relating to his mythic features as a god (or quite accurately as a δαίμων or δαιμόνιον), and to his role as political antagonist, appropriated as a symbol in Hellenistic political ideology, thus also representing the demonic power behind the oppressive kingdom from a Jewish perspective. I have argued that the wilderness temptation story alludes most clearly to Elijah as a type for Mark's Jesus, employed throughout the gospel of Mark, but signals also the wilderness of the Exodus story, and the prophetic vision of a new exodus through the wilderness and the peace-making with/among the wild animals in Isaiah. The wilderness/desert as a space connected to the "habitat" of demonic beings, and especially to Pan in a Greco-Roman context, suggest that Satan in Mark 1:13 alludes to Pan. This is strengthened by the literary parallel between the apocalyptic events of the narratives in the introduction of Mark and the apocalyptic events in the climactic Caesarea-Philippi cycle where Pan represents Baal, as argued in this study. The story of the Gerasene demoniac likewise reveals plausible allusions to Pan in the details of the text. If a comparison between Pan and Jesus is already established for Mark's audience,⁶⁶⁷ a connection to Pan in these details would be closer, and more easily triggered. Finally, I conclude that a juxtaposition of Jesus and Pan-as-Satan/demon, highlights from a broader perspective a negotiation between the heavenly and the earthly, humans and nature, and chaos and order. In Mark, the chaotic, and "evil" sides of nature and human existence, represented by Satan and the demons – the "shadow"-sides of Pan – are contrasted against Jesus' ministry of peace, order, liberation, and restoration, and his power over all creation.

⁶⁶⁷ I assume that while the intricate literary structure of Mark might not be immediately perceived in a reading/hearing of the gospel for the first time, we should assume that Mark was composed with the presumption that it would be read/heard several times so that textual parallels, intercalations, et cetera, would have been picked up after several readings (as for Markan scholars today!).

6 Summary, Conclusions, and Outlook

The aim of this study has been firstly to use the recurring Christ-Pan comparison that is present in Western culture to investigate the New Testament, and to discern implications of this motif in the text of Mark. Secondly, with the juxtaposition of Jesus and Pan as lens, I have aimed to highlight discourses of nature in relation to Mark's presentation of Jesus and his ministry that can contribute to the contemporary field of ecological interpretations of the Bible.

In the overview of the reception history in the first chapter, I showed that Christ has been compared to Pan in various creative ways at different times for different purposes, notably drawing from their similarities of being Lord of All nature, and “good shepherd”, representing the pastoral countryside. On the other hand, the two figures have been contrasted as antagonists, Pan as Satan or the Demon defeated by Christ. At the heart of these various interpretations in reception history seems to have been a negotiation between the divine, the human, and nature, between nature and culture, and an ambivalence towards the pagan world in a Christian society. This trajectory traces back to Eusebius' polemical contrast between Christ and Pan, but we noted that some sources suggest that it was not a novelty invented by Eusebius, and our study turned its focus to the context and time of the New Testament.

I then presented the reception exegetical approach and argued for its value to shed new light on biblical texts and expose the situatedness of modern interpretations. I also argued that the choice of material – the biblical interpretation or adaptation chosen for such a study – likely affects the outcomes of exegetical study. I claimed that a study of Pan as a symbol of nature can provide a bridge between the texts in their historical context and our contemporary ecological concerns, and challenge modern concepts and categories of “nature” and “the environment”. I presented an agrarian perspective, developed in previous scholarship, and argued that it corresponds more accurately to premodern anthropology and the worldview of the Hebrew Bible, as well as the New Testament, and the culture in which these were embedded.

Chapter 2 presented relevant aspects of the agrarian context of Mark, Jesus, and Pan, and highlighted how political, religious, economic, and ecological aspects intersected (and why these categories can misdirect our

understanding of the historical contexts and the texts). Moreover, I demonstrated that the cult of Pan is a relevant part of the cultural encyclopaedia of the New Testament. From textual and archaeological sources, I pointed out that the Pan-cult was widely spread and gained popularity in the Greco-Roman world, including first-century Palestine, especially his major cult place in Paneas/Caesarea Philippi, significant as geo-theological and geo-political space. Pan's cosmic feature of being god of "All" in popular interpretations (likely alluded to also by Jewish authors), and his role in primordial chaos myth, relates him to mythical and philosophical notions about cosmos and nature. Moreover, Pan's important symbolic function in imperial ideology is evident in the appropriation of Pan by the ruling powers of the Roman empire (and earlier in the Macedonian dynasty), in Roman mythological history, and in his connection to the Capricorn sign.

As shepherd-god and patron of shepherds and flocks, at home in wilderness areas, he is significant for real shepherds. Pan/Faunus occurs repeatedly in Roman pastoral literature as part of a utopian landscape and bringer of fertility and bounty, which further connects Pan to imperial ideology. Moreover, we saw that Pan takes an auxiliary and mediating function in relation to other "higher" deities, notably Zeus. These features, I suggested, correspond conceptually, and in some cases in literary details of the textual sources, to features of Jesus in Mark (and other New Testament texts). Thus, the contextualization in chapter 2 shows that the points of contacts between Pan and Christ seen in reception history were all in place by the time of the New Testament, but also several additional features that potentially could have triggered a comparison. The contextualization showed in addition that Jewish and pagan worlds intersected to a large degree – sharing roughly the same cosmology – and that Jesus was inevitably compared to, and by implication, in competition with, numerous diverse divine beings in the Greco-Roman world, also and perhaps especially, with Pan. My conclusion, already from this point in the study, is that it is more likely than not, that Pan and Jesus were cognitively brought together *somehow*, and by *some* in the first century.

In chapter 3, I turned then to what I consider to be the closest point of contact between Jesus and Pan, the territory of Pan, at Paneas/Caesarea Philippi and Mount Hermon, and the narratives in Mark taking place at this significant location. Assuming that Mark is anchored in a Jewish tradition and in the Jewish scriptures, and that Mark's text is a unified textual whole with intricate and eloquent literary features, I argued in line

with several previous interpretations of Mark for a strong intertextual relationship to the Elijah-Elisha cycle in 1 Kgs 17–2 Kgs 13, and for an implied Elijah-typology in the gospel of Mark. I claimed that the reason for this is not only literary, but also theological. Mark's Jesus is presented as the new Elijah, and Jesus carries out the awaited restoration of the land, the people, and of all creation, drawn from subsequent Elijah-expectations, and from a continuing Jewish theological tradition. Signalled by the loaded expression εἰς ὄρος ὑψηλόν (to a high mountain), in the beginning of the ascension to the mountain of transfiguration and paired with Jesus' confrontation with the unclean spirit of the panoleptic boy immediately following, Mark alludes to the story of Elijah and Baal, and consequently, to the theological motifs actualized in this context, but also brought together in prophetic and apocalyptic texts. In the events at Hermon, Jesus is presented as the new Elijah, a counterpart to what the Deuteronomistic hero performed on mount Carmel. This strongly implies that Pan is the counterpart to Baal, the former Jewish idol *par excellence*, with a history deeply rooted in the Dan-Banias geography. I also showed that the context of the cult of Pan at Paneas/Caesarea Philippi, amalgamated with the imperial cult at this sanctuary, and the mimicry of the *apotheosis* of the Caesar and his divine aspirations, suggests that the narrative in Mark is a counter-narrative to imperial ideology.

In chapter 4, I showed that the wilderness feeding in Mark 6, with its shepherd imagery – grounded in and intelligible from the perspective of an agrarian culture of agro-pastoralism – corresponds to the employment of the shepherd motif in Jewish traditions, but also to its use in broader Greco-Roman culture, especially in Roman pastoral poetry. The juxtaposition of Herod's opulent banquet for the ruling elite with Jesus' idyllic meal in a pastoral setting challenges Herod's depraved luxurious lifestyle and his oppressive rule, and mimics utopian visions of nutritional abundance, fruitfulness, and harmony, which were used in promoting the rule of the Caesar and Roman imperial splendour. The Golden Age ideology of the empire is contrasted and challenged by Mark's presentation of Jesus as the true shepherd-messiah, and the inauguration of the kingdom of God. Both eschatological visions entailed abundance of food, peace, liberation, harmony, and order, and they were both ecological utopias. The shepherd-god Pan/Faunus functioned in the former ideology as the guarantor of fruitfulness and cosmic order, whereas Jesus is the true shepherd who brings order and natural abundance in Mark.

In the final chapter, I retrojected the medieval and modern image of Satan as a satyr-like figure with similar features as Pan onto the ancient context, and I argued that a connection between Pan and satanic and demonic beings probably has its roots in theriomorphic demonic creatures and deities found in Jewish, Christian, and other ancient cultures. Associations of demonic beings with Pan could easily have occurred in Jewish traditions long before Eusebius, on the basis of their similar depictions as goat-like beings, the spatial conjuncture of the wilderness and precipitous habitat, and the functional features as noon-day demon, their frightening appearance, and bestial sexuality. Pan as symbol of Hellenistic (and later Roman) rulership would make Pan a spiritual/political antagonist to YHWH's Israel – the demonic power behind the oppressive kingdom, possible alluded to in the apocalyptic text of Daniel. More striking perhaps is the connection to Pan and Asael/Azazel in 1 Enoch, which locates the descent of the Watchers, and thus the origin of evil, on Mount Hermon, at one of Pan's main cult places. This northern territory, as pointed out earlier in this study, connects this location in Jewish tradition with the “sins of Jeroboam” and the worship of Baal(-Hermon), which was succeeded by the worship of Pan in Hellenistic and Roman times. A succession or amalgamation of the cult of Baal and Pan is evident also from the inscriptions in the cave of Elijah on Mount Carmel. I explored narratives in Mark where Satan and demons occur – presupposing Mark's acquaintance with traditions and notions that connect Pan with demonic beings, and that Mark's “πνεῦμα τὸ ἀκάθαρτον/unclean spirits” or “δαίμόνιον/demon”, and (ὁ) σατανᾶς also connoted “the gods of the nations”. My study of Pan-as-Satan in Mark suggested that Pan is implied as Satan in the wilderness temptation. I also showed that several details in the story of the Gerasene demoniac resemble features of Pan and his mytho-space, with cosmic and political overtones. The existence of a Pan-cult in Decapolis (Hippus) increases the plausibility of allusions to Pan in this story.

I conclude that the myths, cult, and features of Pan thematically, theologically, and geographically intersected with those of Jesus as presented in the gospel of Mark. Jesus and Pan shared (parts of) the same space, geographically and conceptually, which most likely led to comparison, associations, and negotiations, and hence, identification/merging, and polemic mimicry. Pan's demonic features and association with Roman oppressive rule on the other hand present the pagan god as antagonist to Jesus. This is evident in the history of interpretation as we have seen, but the points of contact between Christ

and Pan, as this study shows, were part of the cultural context already by the time Mark's gospel was formed and spread.

The undertaking of this thesis has been to point out how in various ways the Pan-cult was related to political, philosophical, religious, and spatial discourses in the cultural matrix of Mark's gospel. Thus, my thesis rests not so much on single instances of evidence or indications but forms a cumulative case in which all indications should be taken together. However, the strongest single point of contact between the gospel of Mark and the cult of Pan, I conclude, is Jesus' visit to Paneas/Caesarea Philippi, and the significant events that take place at this important location, which are told at a central turning point in the gospel narrative. An implied polemic between Jesus and Pan, read as a counterpart to the Elijah-Baal polemic and its theological and eschatological implications, sheds new light on the story of the transfiguration and the purpose of Jesus' journey to the area of Caesarea Philippi, and provides an additional argument for an Elijah typology in Mark.

By reading Mark's presentation of Jesus through the lens of the cult of the nature-god Pan, this study forefronts the bucolic and agrarian landscapes, the wilderness, and the sea, that reveal new understandings of the gospel's discourse on geography, nature, and spatiality, which has mythical, theological, and political significance. Thus, this study confirms and strengthen previous research that emphasizes the importance of geography, and spatial aspects in the gospel of Mark. Moreover, a focus on the material culture of Mark's agrarian context highlights the lived reality of local people, and the intersection between ecology, economy, politics, and theology, often unobserved in New Testament studies, at least until recently.

My reading of Mark's presentation of Jesus in this context, also sheds light on Christology in Mark. An implied negotiation and competition between Jesus and Pan suggested in this study confirms previous readings of Mark that point out Jesus' rural character and his closeness to the physical environment, especially wilderness and mountainous areas. However, as we have seen, the "natural" world of Jesus – usually appropriated in ecological readings – is in Mark caught up in a cosmic battle against evil. Acknowledgement of Mark's cosmic-eschatological focus can thus lead to the conclusion that elements of the natural world only function as symbols of a spiritual reality.⁶⁶⁸ Interpreting Jesus as Pan brings together the cosmic

⁶⁶⁸ See discussion in Harris, 'Synoptic Gospels', 215-217.

aspects with the rustic creaturely aspects and suggest that Jesus is presented by Mark as Lord of nature and fertility, in close approximation to Pan. On the other hand, Pan as Satan contrasts Jesus in relation to aspects of Pan associated with the evil sides of nature and existence and shows that the state of nature (including humans) is not accepted as it is. It awaits a redemption and a renewal, brought about through Jesus.

6.1 Discourses of Nature

I will now summarize discourses of nature in Mark and his ancient world and suggest how these can put modern views in perspective. I will also propose questions that can arise from my study and briefly discuss potential contemporary implications and issues beyond what has been investigated in my thesis. As we have seen, in imperial ideology, Rome's present and future prosperity was expressed in reinterpretations of Greek primordial myths and pastoral poetry and presented as a return to a Golden Age of abundance and fruitfulness. The Caesar was depicted as the guarantor of a restoration of the earth to its primeval original state, connecting himself to divine genealogy, and appropriating fertility gods, the symbols of cornucopia and the Capricorn, and divine titles. In these myths, Pan occupies a deputy role as the son of Zeus, and in the primordial battle between the gods and the titans, Pan assists Zeus to slay the cosmic monster Typhon. Similarly in Mark, the mission of Jesus, and the idea of the coming kingdom of God derived from Jewish traditions, entailed a wide scope of transformation, including ecological aspects, as part of a non-fragmented worldview.

Both against its Jewish background, and in its Greco-Roman environment, Mark's depiction of Jesus clearly reflects a culture where spiritual and cosmic realities intersect with material and local matters in the present. Mark's Jesus oscillates between his cosmic role as ruler over the evil demonized world and of the forces of nature, and his role as an earthly Messiah, a Jewish Galilean ministering to hungry and diseased people. The temporal dimension of the kingdom of God likewise oscillates between the past, the present, and the future. An eschatological future victory of God over evil forces and a renewing of creation's pristine goodness is still waiting for its revelation and fulfilment and at the same time, Mark's Jesus is revealed as the Lord of creation in the present. His proclamation that "the kingdom of God has drawn near" is followed by an imperative to repent and believe the good news, because the time is fulfilled (Mark 1:15). The evil state of the world, however, also awaits a coming judgement and

a cataclysmic reordering of the cosmos, including the political order (Mark 13). Thus, in a worldview where reality was perceived as a temporal-spatial unity, future visions shaped present life.

This study is relevant for contemporary eco-critical readings of the Bible by placing Mark's gospel in the matrix of nature-discourses that were current in its cultural environment. It presents a non-modern understanding that puts modern framing of environmental issues in perspective. Parallel to ongoing mainstream debates on environmental issues, scholars from various fields of Humanities have specifically turned their focus on the framing of contemporary environmental and nature discourses. According to a general consensus in Environmental Humanities, these issues are often too narrowly framed as scientific problems that are to be solved with technical solutions.⁶⁶⁹ The intersection between environmental degradation on the one hand, and politics, economics, psychology, health, and ethics on the other has gained increasing attention among scholars, but to a lesser degree in public debate. Ecological disasters resulting in famines, health issues, lack of resources, unemployment, and forced migration, are often a major factor in political conflicts. Ecological destructions are also not seldom a tragic result of military conflicts. Climate change and ecological degradation affect all aspects of society and relate to global justice as well as personal ways of life and morality. These contemporary issues find several antecedents in the time of the New Testament, in Mark and its cultural context, that provide perspective on our way of framing things.

The gospel of Mark and its cultural context present a worldview in which social, moral, spiritual, political, economic, and ecological aspects of existence were held together, and this sheds light on contemporary society, as well as Christian theology and practice. This is not to say that all practices of that time or particular parts of various cosmologies (which may be difficult to accept in view of contemporary scientific knowledge) form a normative example for people today. They might, however, provide an outsider's corrective to the compartmentalizing and uprootedness from nature that is characteristic of modern affluent and industrialized society. Ancient people, including the biblical writers, often viewed a rural life as ideal and shared the fundamental experience of living in an obvious relation to the land and soil; this was an agrarian society in which even

⁶⁶⁹ Neimanis, Astrida, Cecilia Åsberg, and Johan Hedrén. 'Four Problems, Four Directions For Environmental Humanities: Toward Critical Posthumanities For the Anthropocene.' *Ethics & the Environment* 20.1 (2015): 67-97.

urban people knew and related to the intersected mechanisms and cycles of soil, weather, harvest, food, famine, economy, politics, and worship. These mechanisms are to a large extent hidden in the affluent West, in which spheres of life and society are to a large extent divided and most people live, eat, and work detached from their natural “environment”.

Moreover, contemporary environmental science and discourse rest on, and imply fundamental narratives, ideologies, and worldviews.⁶⁷⁰ The current ecological crisis is framed in modern “secular” culture by ideological narratives that are to some degree analogous to the eschatological and apocalyptic visions, and utopian ideals, discussed in this study. These visions and ideals reflect the society in which they are formed.⁶⁷¹ Contemporary Western society is to a large extent shaped by the utopian idea of progress. In current environmental debates, the narrative of continuing technological and societal progress often shapes decisions in politics and of individuals. On the other hand, scientific prognoses of climate change, ecological degradation and extinction of species, create a vision of the future that expects a coming apocalyptic disaster and a sense of judgement on humanity.

In Mark’s gospel, the tensions between apocalyptic prophecy of a coming judgement over evil and the fulfilment of a promise of abundance are played out both concretely and symbolically. Mark’s eschatological announcement of the coming kingdom of God did not entail escapism or detachment from the material reality but encouraged its audience to faithfully adhere to the good news of the gospel and participate in the renewal of creation in the present, modelled after the earthly ministry of Jesus. This is especially relevant for contemporary Christian readings of the bible in times of environmental crisis. Understandings of Christian eschatology inform and shape Christian ethics, also regarding human relations to the natural world.

6.1.1 The Shadow of Nature and the Green Shadow of Christ

Narratives of the past and the future – told in creation myths, eschatological prophecies, or in modern narratives about society – can be seen as ways to deal with questions of the origin of humans and the origin

⁶⁷⁰ Hoffman, Andrew J. *How Culture Shapes the Climate Change Debate*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2015, 5; Garrard, Greg. *Ecocriticism*. London: Routledge, 2011, 5.

⁶⁷¹ Neutel, Karin B. *A Cosmopolitan Ideal: Paul's Declaration 'Neither Jew Nor Greek, Neither Slave Nor Free, Nor Male and Female' in the Context of First-century Thought*. Bloomsbury Publishing, 2015. 43.

of evil, and to cope with decay and death. Humanity does not shrug its shoulders in indifference in the face of murder, tsunamis, or pandemics, but typically seeks to find what is wrong with nature, society, and humans. Narratives about origins and futures help to negotiate and navigate ethically in the present, especially in times of crisis. Ethical decisions are guided by an idea of a *telos*, whether consciously or not. The current ecological crisis has brought to the fore questions of moral guilt, personal responsibility, and the role of humans in relation to nature. Humans can be seen as both the root cause of the ongoing destruction of nature, but at the same time also considered to have the ability and responsibility to mitigate destruction and restore nature. People's failures to live and act sustainably are seen on one hand as moral shortcomings of the individual – perhaps as a result of their “nature” – or on the other, as a result of deficient structures of the societal and cultural environment. A responsibility of the individual to lessen her “carbon footprint”, is paralleled with a message that often places the responsibility on politicians and the “system”. In biblical traditions, negotiations of the origin of evil and sin, humans are on one hand seen as victims of evil powers: cosmic, as well as political. Nevertheless, they are also held personally responsible for moral sins. Human evil and evil in the natural universe, however, were seen as interdependent.

Pan as a theriomorphic hybrid god, a fusion of human and bestial, god and creature, is rather unique in the Greco-Roman pantheon (which generally consists of anthropomorphic deities) in this mediatory function. His ambiguous nature served in his polytheistic context to negotiate the fertile power of nature and the cosmic order, as well as the frightening and bestial sides: infertility, panic, possession, madness, and sexual instincts. In Jewish thought, however, these shadow sides of nature (and human existence) became more detached from God and projected onto demonic beings. In Mark, Jesus represents cosmic order, health, peace, and fruitfulness, whereas storms, illness, madness, and chaos, are demonic evils that he “rebukes”.

Thus, this study can raise questions about the development and function of Satan, and ideas about (the problem of) evil. How can this be understood in relation to human experiences and notions about nature as both beautiful, bountiful, and benign, but also frightening, lethal, and evil? Moreover, how can the emerging idea of evil personified as half man, half animal, in Jewish-Christian tradition, shed light on human-nature relation, and the theological distinction between natural evil and moral evil?

The trajectory of a personified evil being, interestingly takes up the double natured goat-god Pan as Satan. For Eusebius and subsequent Christian tradition, Pan as the demon/Satan univocally embodies evil. In the development of Christianity, a dualistic opposition between God and Satan, and between Creator and creation, brought with it a tendency in some Christian traditions (up to this day), of a renouncing, or at least a downplaying of bodiliness, the material, and nature all together, with the view that the material world is contingent and mainly irrelevant for Christian faith. This dualistic separation and opposition between human and nature, however, eclipses the fact that humans themselves are nature, and wholly dependent on non-human creation.

In contemporary contextual hermeneutics, it is often held that the Bible has an anthropocentric bias. My study shows that the text itself is formed in a culture with a more integrated worldview, in the sense that “spiritual” matters and earthly material life was interrelated. Cosmology, cults, politics, social life, economy, and agriculture intersected and formed a unity. Mark’s gospel, seen in its cultural context and anchored in the Jewish belief in YHWH’s renewal of creation, presents a narrative that is not anthropocentric in the sense that humans as the crown of creation have a status that justifies the exploitation of their natural environment for their own good. Rather, the announcement of the kingdom of God in Mark is theocentric in the sense that God the creator, through his earthly representative Jesus Christ, inaugurates the promised renewal of all creation. The inextricable link between the destiny of human and non-human creation is presupposed and implied in the narratives in Mark, as investigated in this study. Mark’s gospel is, I conclude, an apologetic call to adhere to a new community of faith centred around Jesus Christ as the true ruler of creation, and to follow God’s creational order that governs spiritual, political, ecological, and moral life. As explained in the parable of the mustard seed (Mark 4:30-32), God’s rule applies also to nature’s ecological organisation, to which humans by implication should abide. To Mark’s gospel of the coming kingdom of God is thus significantly added an exhortation to preach the gospel to “all creation” (Mark 16:15).

Unfortunately, later Christian traditions has at times tended towards a dualistic thinking that has fostered anthropocentric biblical interpretations hand in hand with an anthropocentric and overly “spiritual” focus on “faith” as something mainly cognitive. Regardless of how such notions are traced historically, they nevertheless show up. Notably in Christian eschatological belief in a future rapture away from the human earthly and

bodily condition to a spiritual heaven, has downplayed or even opposed an ecologically sustainable lifestyle. A critique of a dualistic separation between human and nature can likewise be directed towards modern utopias of development and human independence and superiority over a disenchanted nature.⁶⁷²

In the margins of Western history, Pan has survived as a symbol of the pastoral landscape and untamed nature, and as a contrast and corrective to the idea of human detachment and sovereignty over nature, notably during the Renaissance and the Industrial Revolution, and he still lurks as patron-god in alternative ecological movements. My study of the gospel of Mark in the light of the cult of Pan has shown that both Jesus and Pan were perceived as gods of nature, and that Mark's presentation of Jesus was negotiated in relation to Pan in his varying aspects. Jesus is presented in opposition to the demonic sides of Pan – the shadow of nature, but also in similarity to the aspects of Pan that represent cosmic order, rustic creatureliness, closeness to nature and animals, bucolic landscapes, pastoral care, fertility, and bountiful nature. These aspects of Pan are thus, in a sense, the green shadow of Christ.

⁶⁷² On the disenchantment of nature in modernity, see Taylor, Charles. *A Secular Age*. Harvard University Press, 2015. 75-89.

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Appendix: The Death of Pan and the Death of Christ

The similarities between Christ and Pan with regard to the fact that they both are divine figures who died, deserves consideration. Are there any evidence or indications of a conjunction of the death of Pan and the death of Christ in the historical context of Mark? In reception history, the story of the death of Pan has been interpreted as an event connected to the death of Christ, as we have seen. Either as a result of Christ's victory over Pan the demon (and by implication all demons) as in Eusebius' account, or as the same event, i.e., the story of the death of Pan was in fact about the death of Christ, as in several interpretations from at least the renaissance and after. The juxtaposition of the death of Christ and Pan in reception history – starting with Eusebius, as far as we know – is evidently sparked by the story of Pan's death in Plutarch's *De Defectu Oraculorum*, and obviously the gospel accounts of the death of Jesus. We cannot, however, exclude other factors or sources that might have inspired a comparison. Here, I will tentatively examine the historical context of Mark's narratives of the death of Jesus and sketch possible points of contact. First, the Plutarchan text will be examined in relation to the gospel of Mark, and thereafter, I will explore other possible connections between the death of the Markan Jesus and traditions of Pan.

Stories of Dying Divinities in Plutarch and Mark

One of the enigmas of the story of the death of Pan in Plutarch is that of a dying deity, since, in Greek religion, gods were immortal. The text from Plutarch's *De Defectu Oraculorum* in *Moralia*, the compilation of Plutarchan texts, reads as follow:

As for death among such beings, I have heard the words of a man who was not a fool nor an imposter. The father of Aemilianus the orator, to whom some of you have listened, was Epitherses, who lived in our town and was my teacher in grammar. He said that once upon a time in making a voyage to Italy he embarked on a ship carrying freight and many passengers. It was already evening when, near the Echinades Islands, the wind dropped, and the ship drifted near Paxi. Almost everybody was awake, and a good many had not finished their after-dinner wine. Suddenly from the island of Paxi was heard the voice of someone loudly calling Thamus, so

that all were amazed. Thamus was an Egyptian pilot, not known by name even to many on board. Twice he was called and made no reply, but the third time he answered; and the caller, raising his voice, said, ‘When you come opposite to Palodes, announce that Great Pan is dead.’ On hearing this, all, said Epitherses, were astounded and reasoned among themselves whether it were better to carry out the order or to refuse to meddle and let the matter go. Under the circumstances Thamus made up his mind that if there should be a breeze, he would sail past and keep quiet, but with no wind and a smooth sea about the place he would announce what he had heard. So, when he came opposite Palodes, and there was neither wind nor wave, Thamus from the stern, looking toward the land, said the words as he had heard them: ‘Great Pan is dead.’ Even before he had finished there was a great cry of lamentation, not of one person, but of many, mingled with exclamations of amazement. As many persons were on the vessel, the story was soon spread abroad in Rome, and Thamus was sent for by Tiberius Caesar. Tiberius became so convinced of the truth of the story that he caused an inquiry and investigation to be made about Pan; and the scholars, who were numerous at his court, conjectured that he was the son born of Hermes and Penelope. Moreover, Philip had several witnesses among the persons present who had been pupils of the old man Aemilianus. (Plutarch, *De Defect.* 17.)⁶⁷³

Interpretations of this enigmatic story are as numerous as they are divided. In Borgeaud’s investigation, Plutarch’s report is considered authentic. Not necessarily the story that Plutarch refers to, but at least, “what is true and presented as such”, Borgeaud states, “is a rumor that spreads through Rome during the reign of Tiberius concerning the death of the great Pan.”⁶⁷⁴ According to Borgeaud, Tiberius’ interest in Pan and his assumed death is best fitted in the “climate of a period of imperial history marked by frequency of signs and portents, as well as by the consequence in the Roman Empire of movements of the Messianic-revolutionary sort.”⁶⁷⁵ The report of the death of Jesus – convicted for claiming to be a king – did most likely reach Tiberius, and another report of a “dead god” might have been a troubling coincidence, Borgeaud reasons. Tertullian reports that Tiberius “received intelligence” from Palestine concerning Jesus.⁶⁷⁶ There might

⁶⁷³ English translation *LCL*.

⁶⁷⁴ Borgeaud, ‘Death’, 258.

⁶⁷⁵ Borgeaud, ‘Death’, 260.

⁶⁷⁶ “Tiberius accordingly, in whose days the Christian name made its entry into the world, having himself received intelligence from Palestine of events which had clearly shown the truth of Christ’s divinity, brought the matter before the senate, with his own decision in favour of Christ. The senate, because it had not given the approval itself, rejected his proposal. Caesar held to his opinion, threatening wrath against all accusers of

even have been some kind of relationship between the two events, according to Borgeaud, that the idea of the death of Pan was a consequence of the victory of Christ, in the minds of the early Christ-believers, as it was in the mind of Eusebius 200 years later. However, it is far from clear how the connection would have been.

Several modern interpreters have suggested a ritualist explanation, in other words that the cries of mourning heard by Thamus (the pilot on the ship) and the other people on board, came in fact from participants of an annual mourning ritual connected to Adonis or Attis. Salomon Reinach proposed that the Plutarchan account rested on a coincidentally corrupt legend in which Thamus' name was confused with the Mesopotamian fertility god Tammuz, who received a ritual of mourning connected to the god's annual dying and rebirth – himself personifying the annual death and rebirth of nature.⁶⁷⁷ The confusion, according to Reinach, was that the crying voice from the shore of Paxi, as the text of Plutarch reads “Θαμοῦζ ... Πᾶν ὁ μέγας τέθνηκε/Thamus ... Pan the great is dead”, must have been “Θαμοῦζ πανμέγας τέθνηκε/The very great Tammuz is dead” in its original oral tradition on which Plutarch drew. This idea is dismissed by Borgeaud, who emphasises that the story is not presented as a mythic event, but as history: “a definite fact, an event to which any periodicity was wholly foreign”.

Another attempt to resolve the enigma of Plutarch's story is made by Slobodan Dušanić, who argues that the text of Plutarch “imitates, develops, and adapts somewhat the content of a passage, equally famous, from Plato's *Phaedrus* (274 C-275 D).”⁶⁷⁸ He bases this on similarities/analogies between the two passages,⁶⁷⁹ and concludes that Plutarch's story of the death of Pan “should be denied any historical basis of the kind envisaged by the modern students of the chapter”. Dušanić thinks that Tiberius figures in Plutarch's story more as a literary device, or symbol, than it reflects a historical situation, and that the idea of the death of Pan might well have come from Herodotus, who speaks of the Egyptian

the Christians.” Tertullian *Apologeticus* 5.2. (English translation S. Thelwall, 1885). Though the account regarding Christ divinity and the protection from Tiberius is doubted, it is still likely that Tiberius had reports (from Pilate) about the turbulent situation in Palestine.

⁶⁷⁷ Cf. Ez 8:14.

⁶⁷⁸ Dušanić, Slobodan. ‘Plato and Plutarch's Fictional Techniques: The Death of the Great Pan’. *Rheinisches Museum für Philologie* 139.H. 3/4 (1996): 276-294. 278.

⁶⁷⁹ Notably, the (very unusual) name Thamus occurs in both texts and the Thamus-figures have similar roles in the stories, according to Dušanić. Moreover, Dušanić observes analogies between Tiberius in *De Defectu* and the god Theuth in *Phaedrus* and similarities in the use of “evocative geography” in the two stories. For detailed arguments, see Dušanić's article.

Mendes, also called Pan, and the dying of the sacred he-goat.⁶⁸⁰ Plutarch choosing of Pan for his story rests on Pan's role as inspiring divinity in Plato's *Phaedrus*, Dušanić maintains.

A close examination and assessment of Plutarch's story and the many various interpretations suggested would expand beyond the limits of the present study. We can conclude, from the brief accounts above that scholars are divided regarding the historicity of Plutarch's story of the death of Pan. It can be said, however, that even if Plutarch's story to some extent imitates and adopts Plato's *Phaedrus* (which seems plausible), his story could still reflect historical circumstances about a rumour of the death of Pan and Tiberius' interest with it, as Bourgeaud contends. Such an interest would not have been coincidental, given the strong indications of Tiberius' personal interest in Pan, as I have shown earlier. This factor is unnoticed in Dušanić's analysis.

Thus, if Plutarch's account refers to a historical event – a rumor of Pan's death, that caused Tiberius' investigation – it does coincide in time with the death of Jesus. And if the notion of Pan's death was spread at the time of the composition of Mark's gospel, it could have sparked some kind of comparison for the author of Mark, or his early recipients. A comparison between the accounts of the deaths of Pan and Jesus does not, however, indicate strong similarities. The story in Plutarch says nothing of how (and why) Pan died, whereas the passion narrative in Mark is a more detailed account of trials, mocking, crucifixion, death, and burial. There is in both stories, a spreading of a message, but in the case of Mark, about Jesus' resurrection, whereas in Plutarch, it is about the death.

Some details might suggest similarity. Tiberius' investigation concerning Pan's identity concludes that Pan "was the son born of Hermes and Penelope", and in Mark, the Roman soldier concluded that Jesus "must have been the son of God". Jesus' saying in Mark 14:27, "πατάξω τὸν ποιμένα, καὶ τὰ πρόβατα διασκορπισθήσονται (I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered)" could perhaps have evoke the idea (seen

680 Dušanić, 'Plato and Plutarch', 287. The text of Herodotus reads "This is why the Egyptians of whom I have spoken sacrifice no goats, male or female: the Mendesians reckon Pan among the eight gods who, they say, were before the twelve gods. Now in their painting and sculpture, the image of Pan is made with the head and the legs of a goat, as among the Greeks; not that he is thought to be in fact such, or unlike other gods; but why they represent him so, I have no wish to say. The Mendesians consider all goats sacred, the male even more than the female, and goatherds are held in special estimation: one he-goat is most sacred of all; when he dies, it is ordained that there should be great mourning in all the Mendesian district. In the Egyptian language Mendes is the name both for the he-goat and for Pan. In my lifetime a strange thing occurred in this district: a he-goat had intercourse openly with a woman. This came to be publicly known." (Herodotus, *The Histories* 2.46. LCL.)

in Eusebius' and after) that Jesus caused the death of Pan. Though most interpreters assume that the first person singular πατάξω refers to God, who will strike the shepherd (Jesus), the first person singular in 14:28 (προάξω) abruptly refers to Jesus as subject. This opens the text to an ambiguity and a reading of the text that has Jesus as the subject in v.27, striking the shepherd. If some early recipients of Mark who already had in mind a Jesus-Pan juxtaposition from the shepherd-motif in chapter 6 and the from events in Caesarea-Philippi/Banias in 8:27-9:29, the shepherd-motif taken up in 14:27-28 might spark the idea that Jesus strikes the shepherd Pan.

Another possible reason why Pan could have come to mind at this point in Mark, is the larger eschatological context in Zechariah, echoed in Mark.⁶⁸¹ The prophecies in Zechariah played an important role in the apocalyptic expectations of Gods' deliverance and interventions by the time of Mark's composition. The deliverance of the people of God entailed cataclysmic events in the natural world and restoration of nature (Zech 14:4-8, cf. Mark 13). In the final battle, according to the prophecy in Zechariah, YHWH intervenes in the enemy troops by sending a great panic causing the enemies to seize and kill one another (see 5.2.3). Pan was well-known for precisely this kind of interaction in war (see 2.6). This possible allusion to Pan, by evoking the larger context in Zechariah would however require several mental steps for a reader, or the author, and it still does not relate to the death of Pan. The acknowledging of Jesus and Pan as "Son of God"/"son born of Hermes and Penelope" respectively, might have very different functions in the two accounts, and is not sufficient to conclude that Mark somehow alluded or mimicked the story of Pan's death. Moreover, the possible reading of 14:27, that Jesus will strike the shepherd Pan goes against the grain of Mark's use of Zechariah (and other prophetic traditions employed by Mark). In Mark, it turns out that it is Jesus who is the shepherd that is being sacrificed as the suffering servant.

In other words, it does not seem to be any clear relation or similarities between the *stories* of the death of Jesus and the death of Pan, as they are narrated in Plutarch and Mark. We cannot even be certain that the story of Pan's death was floating around when Mark was composed, since we only have it in written form in Plutarch's *Moralia*, most likely written after Mark. However, it is still reasonable as an undertaking in reception

⁶⁸¹ According to Joel Marcus, "[T]he events spoken of in Mark 14:22-28 are to be viewed as eschatological happenings. For Mark, the occurrences of Jesus' last night on earth inaugurates the time of eschatological testing spoken of by Zechariah." (Marcus, *Way*, 159.)

exegesis, to investigate in the historical context possible correspondence between Mark's narrative of the death of Jesus, and Pan and his cult. We do this by broaden our focus to the matrix of ideas and myths in the Greco-Roman world in which the death of Jesus was made intelligible.

Searching for Meaning in the Death of Jesus and Pan

While the death of Jesus of Nazareth has a firm historical anchoring, the death of Pan is another story. From a modern perspective, Pan is of course a purely mythological figure, and his alleged death would consequently be a question about a historical notion of his death. It should however be kept in mind that myth and "reality" were not as distinguished in antiquity as one might assume today. This applies also to the gospel narratives about Jesus, and to the exegetical difficulties of sorting out what was "historical", mythological "dressing", literary devices, and so on. That a Jew called Jesus was executed in Roman Palestine around year 30 is commonly agreed as a historical fact, but the *meaning* of his death is a matter loaded with theological and mythological issues. In Christian tradition, the meaning of the death of Jesus has in the course of theological reflexion and disputes sifted out a Christology and soteriology hinged on the death (and resurrection) of Jesus, as a climax and apex of a salvation history seen in the Bible. The authors of the gospels certainly understood and depicted the death of Jesus against the backdrop of the Hebrew scriptures.⁶⁸² They narrated the death of Jesus by using metaphors and literary patterns notably derived from Jewish tradition, but most likely also from other ancient Mediterranean cultures. Martin Hengel, in his monography *The Atonement: The Origins of the Doctrine in the New Testament*, poses a question relevant for our study:

How did the Gentile audience in the Graeco-Roman world understand this strange new message of the crucified and risen Son of God and redeemer? Were its categories, for example that of the representative atoning death of Jesus, completely alien to people who did not know either the Old Testament or the Jewish Haggadah?⁶⁸³

⁶⁸² In the case of Mark's passion narrative, commonly suggested Hebrew Bible influences includes: the Isianic servant songs, Zechariah 9-14, and the lament Psalms (esp. 22 and 69). See e.g., Moo, Douglas J. *The Old Testament in the Gospel Passion Narratives*. Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2008 and Hays, *Echoes*.

⁶⁸³ Hengel, Martin. *The Atonement: The Origins of the Doctrine in the New Testament*. Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2007. 2.

Hengel eschews a dichotomous division between Judaism and Hellenism, and points out that Jews had already lived under Greek influence for several decades by the time of Jesus, and that the New Testament cultural environment was a “relative cultural and spiritual unity”, a prerequisite for the successful spreading of the gospel of Jesus’ atoning death among non-Jewish peoples.⁶⁸⁴ Mentioning several examples from Greek and Roman texts of noble voluntary and vicarious death for the city, the country, friends, the law, or the truth, as a way to apotheosis, Hengel argues that a historical understanding of the doctrine of atoning death in the New Testament must “pay very close attention to the Graeco-Roman world”.⁶⁸⁵ He points out instances where the language used for atoning death in Greek and Roman sources sometimes comes very close to formulations of Jesus’ salvific death in the New Testament. Hengel’s observations and advice is helpful to find possible parallels between the death of Jesus in Mark’s narration and (the death of) Pan.

Jesus and Pan as Pharmakos figures

The pharmakos ritual was an ancient rite of elimination similar to the scapegoat ritual in Lev 16. According to scholarly reconstructions of the available sources, the ritual was practiced during the Thergalia spring festival in Athens and Ionia, in which one or two chosen human victim(s) of low status, a pharmakos or pharmakoi, was mockingly dressed and decorated, struck with twigs of fig tree or squills, cursed, assaulted with stones, and driven across the borders of the city – exiled from the community as a scapegoat.⁶⁸⁶ It is unclear whether the victim was killed or not. The ambiguity of the meaning of the word pharmakos and its variants – “drug”, “healing remedy”, “poison”, “sorcerer” – seems to reflect the double nature of the pharmakos, as both a poison that needs to be expelled from the community and at the same time a remedy or atonement to purify the people. The ritual might have been held regularly on an annual basis, or occasionally due to a crisis such as famine or plague. It seems to have been connected to agriculture and fertility, to effect protection of the coming harvest from pests, or cleansing from disease in a more general sense.

Pharmakos rituals looked different in various places and times and the mythic and literary representations of the ritual differ from the actual ritual

⁶⁸⁴ Hengel, *Atonement*, 2-3.

⁶⁸⁵ Hengel, *Atonement*, 5.

⁶⁸⁶ Hughes, Dennis D. *Human Sacrifice in Ancient Greece*, Taylor & Francis Group, 1991. 139-165.

based on available evidence. In her article *Finding Meaning of the Death of Jesus*, Adela Yarbro Collins points out that in the actual rituals, the victims were persons of low status, whereas in texts, they are of high status. In actual rites, an outcast was fed and dressed as a king or a noble to symbolically give them the status to represent society. In mythical representations, a person already of high status was given the role as pharmakos, such as in Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*, in which the king – revered as a god – is transformed into a criminal and a crimping and laid upon all the impurities and gets expelled as a pharmakos.⁶⁸⁷ Collins observes a strong parallel to the Greek pharmakos ritual, and the scene in Mark 15:16-20 where Jesus is mocked by the Roman soldiers.

In the eyes of society, the status of Jesus is low; he is a criminal condemned to death. He is dressed up and treated like a king. The soldiers do this in mockery, but for the implied author and audience, the gesture is ironic affirmation of his actual kingship. From the point of view of the pharmakos ritual, his dress and treatment as a king make him a fit offering to redeem the people. He is crowned with thorns, a wild plant which does not benefit society, analogous to the twigs of the wild fig tree with which the pharmakos is driven out, according to the account of Hipponax. He is struck with a reed, as the pharmakos is struck with the twigs. And in the context of Mark as a whole, his ignominious execution as a criminal is an atonement or a purification for many, as the pharmakos saved or purified his community.⁶⁸⁸

Parallels between the pharmakos ritual in the Markan passion narrative has also been observed by Richard De Maris. He argues that Mark portrays Jesus as a pharmakos, who undergoes a status degradation and expulsion to the effect of a restoration of the unclean land possessed with demons and ruled by corrupt leaders.⁶⁸⁹

While the author of Mark's gospel clearly anchored his representation of Jesus' passion and death mainly from motifs of vicarious suffering and effective death in the Hebrew Bible, the strong parallels to the pharmakos ritual suggests that the author – in a Hellenistic context – expanded or reconfigured the passion narrative, using tropes intelligible in a wider Greco-Roman culture. It might have been intended, perhaps as a mimesis, perhaps for rhetorical purposes, or subconsciously as a result of Mark's

⁶⁸⁷ Collins, Adela Yarbro. 'Finding Meaning in the Death of Jesus'. *The Journal of Religion* 78.2 (1998): 175-196. 185-186.

⁶⁸⁸ Collins, 'Finding', 186-187.

⁶⁸⁹ DeMaris, Richard. *The New Testament in its Ritual World*. Routledge, 2008. 94-95, 107-110.

familiarity with Greek myths, or as a result of a general Hellenistic fusion between the Jewish scapegoat and other curative exit rites, notably the *pharmakos* ritual.

As Jesus (likely) was presented as a *pharmakos* figure, so was (likely) Pan. According to Borgeaud, there are relevant parallels between the ritual of the squill, linked to an Arcadian festival, in which (a statue of) Pan was struck with a squill (a plant used for purification) to stimulate Pan to act and restore animal fertility, and the Hebrew Bible scapegoat ritual and the Greek *pharmakos*:

Even though Pan is a figure of too high status to permit us to identify the ritual of the squill with the *pharmakos* ritual as described by Hipponax, or as the Athenians enacted it at the Thargelia, we should nevertheless recognize certain important analogies between the two [...] The fundamental structure is the same: an individual is chosen and the impurities of the community are attributed or transferred to him; this individual, the *pharmakos*, is thought of as both the source of the trouble and (as the name itself makes clear) the *pharmakos*, i.e., the medicine, the curative charm. The *pharmakos* is thus an ambiguous figure, simultaneously impure and exceptionally sacred. In the Arcadian ritual, Pan has the same paradoxical status: the god is struck and insulted, and is at the same time a powerful source of fertility. Let us notice that the *pharmakos* was picked not only for his low social status; they also chose, as Tzezes says, 'the ugliest available'. [...] As the *pharmakos* is a human monster, so also Pan is a monster among the gods.⁶⁹⁰

In actual *pharmakos* rituals, as Collins noted, a human being of low status was chosen, and not a (statue of a) god. Thus Borgeaud's legitimate hesitance. However, in mythical and literary representations, kings and even divine beings could take a *pharmakos* role, as Oedipus. Pan, even though being a god, might have been seen as a kind of *pharmakos* figure in the ritual of the squill. If Mark's passion narrative has clear parallels to the *pharmakos* ritual and presents Jesus with clear elements from this ritual (which seem probable), and was understood as such, and if traditions of Pan as a *pharmakos* figure being struck with a squill were part of a common cultural encyclopedia in New Testament time,⁶⁹¹ a juxtaposition

⁶⁹⁰ Borgeaud, *Cult of Pan*, 71-72.

⁶⁹¹ The ritual of the squill is mentioned in Theocritus seventh *Idyll*: "O Pan, you who keep the lovely plain on Homole./Bring the boy uninvited into his arms,/Whether it be the delicate Philinos or another./And if you do this, dear Pan, no fear the boys/Of Arcadia with squill across your flanks and shoulders/Will whip you whenever there is too little meat,/But if you won't consent, all across your body with your nails/May you

between Jesus and Pan would not have been far off, especially if the comparison was taken together with other similarities analyzed and examined in this study. Both Pan and Jesus are in a sense (scape-) goats and at the same time gods who die. What brings Jesus and Pan together as pharmakos figures is especially the paradoxical transformation in status and their double nature, a (son of a) god who is insulted for the benefit of the society. Moreover, there is a pattern in the various scapegoat traditions that is of certain interest in this study. A theme of crisis in fertility and restoring the land/nature can be discerned in the context of these rites.

Paradoxically, on the other hand, following the Jewish Second Temple interpretations of the scapegoat Azazel – interpreted as the demonic Asael – who defiled the earth by the sexual transgressions with the daughters of men and was judged and exiled into the wilderness, Pan becomes the antagonist to Christ, the demon, or Satan, who was for Eusebius overthrown by Christ, by effect of his power over the demons and/or his effective death, in the time of Tiberius.

To conclude, it is not anachronistic or impossible that the double motifs in reception history of the death of Pan and Christ could have been an original understanding of Mark's gospel. It should be admitted though, that we are not on firm ground here. The pharmakos ritual is heavily debated as to what might be designated as such, and scapegoat motives can be found in so various cultures and shapes to the extent that some explains it as a universal social phenomenon (as in René Girard's famous theory).⁶⁹² A specific connection between Pan and Jesus as pharmakos figures in Mark's gospel is vague, and rests on too many uncertain factors and too little evidence to suggest with confidence that the text communicated a comparison between the death of Jesus and Pan.

scratch, biting yourself, and sleep in nettles;/May you be in the mountains of Edonia in midwinter,/Following the course of the Hebron, near the Bear;/May you in summer guide your flocks to farthest Ethiopia,/By the rocks of Blemya, where the Nile can be traced no longer. (Theocritus 7.103-14, quoted in Borgeaud, *Cult of Pan*, 68.) Borgeaud reports that this text is commented by scholiasts in Roman time, but any conclusion of how well known and well spread this ritual was in the first century is difficult to say.

⁶⁹² Girard, René. *The Scapegoat*. JHU Press, 1989.